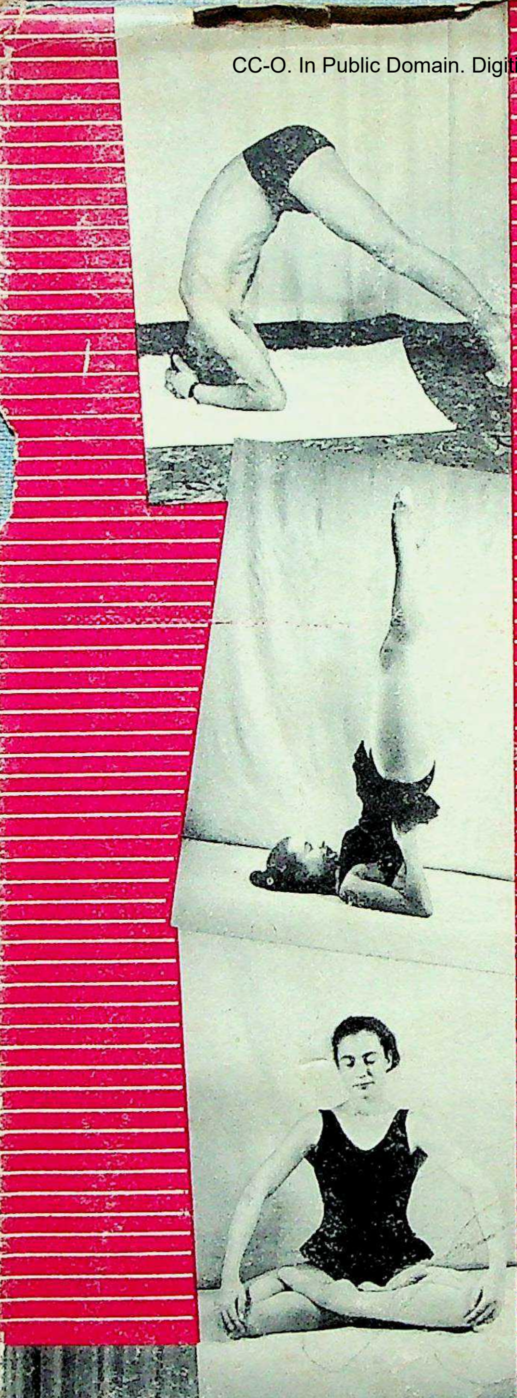


Yoga for Perfect Health

by 'Alain'

$2.75

CONVALESCING after a severe illness the author, who resented his slow progress, turned to Yoga and as a result of his practice of Yoga ideals and exercises was restored to perfect health.

His experience emphasized the need for a clear, simple, not too technical but nevertheless accurate and complete explanation of the science of Yoga adapted to Western understanding.

From the author's Preface:

I have written this book in the hope to be of service. I would have been glad to find a book like this one when I sorely needed it. I looked for it everywhere, but could find the information and guidance I desired only piecemeal, some here, some there, never complete. I said to myself that others would have the same problem and that possibly I could make it easier for them than it had been for me to find the answer. And so I wrote this book.

This book illustrates the author's practical knowledge of Yoga systems of breathing exercises and postures and is presented in a lucid and clear style.

OW

294.54

1763

State Museum Library
1763
Lucknow

YOGA FOR PERFECT HEALTH

YOGA
FOR PERFECT HEALTH

by

ALAIN

Hatha-Yoga insures beauty, health,
strength and long life.
SIVANANDA.

राज्य संग्रहालय पुस्तकालय, लखनऊ
क्रमसंख्या 1763
प्राप्ति तिथि 14.2.69
State Museum, Library, Lko.

ASSOCIATED BOOKSELLERS
WESTPORT, CONN.

©Copyright 1957
by Associated Booksellers

CONTENTS

PREFACE ix

Chapter Page

1. YOGA AND ACTION 1
2. YOGA—WHAT IS IT? 7
3. BACK TO NATURE 12
4. PHYSICAL AND MORAL CONDITIONS OF YOGA TRAINING 16
5. THE IDEA OF BALANCE 21
6. BALANCE IN WALKING 25
7. HOW TO SIT 27
8. A DYNAMIC CONCEPTION OF LIFE . . . 29
9. THE MUDRAS 33
10. MASTERY OF PRANA 37
11. ALL FLESH IS NOT MORTAL 40
12. CAN THE HUMAN LIFE-SPAN BE EXTENDED? . 43
13. THE TECHNIQUE OF LONG LIFE . . . 47
14. HOW TO RELAX 51
15. PRANAYAMA—THE ART OF BREATHING . . 57
    The Complete Yoga Breath . . . 64
    Other Breathing Exercises . . . 68
16. THE ASANAS—YOGA POSTURES . . . 77
    Practical Suggestions to Hatha-Yoga Students 99
    How to Practise 100
    Schedule of Exercises 101
17. KARMA-YOGA 107
18. BHAKTI-YOGA, THE YOGA OF LOVE . . . 115
19. JNANA-YOGA—THE YOGA OF DISCRIMINATION . 119
20. RAJA-YOGA—THE ROYAL PATH . . . 124

Contents

Chapter | Page

21. THE INNER YOGA 135
  - Selections from the "Bhagavad-Gita" . . 136
  - Selections from the Upanishads . . . 139
  - Wisdom of Kapila 143
  - Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali . . . 144
  - Ramakrishna on Yoga 147
  - Self-Realization: *Swami Sivananda* . . 150

GLOSSARY 153

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1—PADMASANA—LOTUS-SEAT . *facing page* 20
Fig. 2—"THE CHAKRAS" . . . . *page* 31
Fig. 3—SAVASANA . . . . *facing page* 21
Fig. 4—YOGA-MUDRA 36
Fig. 5—VAKRASANA 37
Fig. 6—MATSYASANA—FISH POSTURE . . 52
Fig. 7—PASHIMOTTANA 53
Fig. 8—BHUJANGASANA 68
Fig. 9—SALABHASANA 69
Fig. 10—ARDHA-SALABHASANA . . . 84
Fig. 11—DHANURASANA 85
Fig. 12—SARVANGASANA 100
Fig. 13—SARVANGASANA 100
Fig. 14—VIPARITA-KARANI 101
Fig. 15 (a)—SIRSHASANA 116
Fig. 15 (b)—SIRSHASANA 117
Fig. 15 (c)—SIRSHASANA 132
Fig. 16—HALASANA 133

PREFACE

I HAVE written this book in the hope to be of service. I would have been glad to find a book like this one when I sorely needed it. I looked for it everywhere, but could find the information and guidance I desired only piecemeal, some here, some there, never complete. I said to myself that others would have the same problem and that possibly I could make it easier for them than it had been for me to find the answer. And so I wrote this book.

Several years ago I was suddenly and without warning stricken with severe vascular spasms which made it impossible for me to walk more than twenty paces without stopping until the spasm had passed. It took me five minutes to go up a short flight of stairs. The city where I lived is famous for its picturesque hillside location with its winding and climbing streets and passages. To me they were sheer torture. I could be seen walking ten steps at a time, then stopping, while the spasm in the heart region seized me with a brutal hand, pretending to admire something in a shop window or perusing a particularly interesting item in the newspaper I was always carrying with me. My strange behaviour struck people as funny and eccentric and pretty soon I had an established reputation of queerness.

The condition remained stationary for a few months and despite the discomfort and pain it caused me, I accepted it and had almost become resigned to it. Such is human nature.

One day, however, the spasms got worse and did not yield to a short rest. They seized me ever more frequently, even when resting in bed. One night they became so severe that a doctor had to be called. He found me in bed, twitching like a fish out of water. The attack lasted for hours. In the morning I was transferred to a clinic, where I stayed—in bed—for six weeks. For several weeks after that I was allowed to get up and sit in my room or on the balcony, but was unable to walk more than a few steps. A whole winter went by and when spring came I could see from my balcony joyous crowds of people walking down to the lake, many with rucksacks on their backs, prepared for a mountain excursion. Walking, mountain climbing had been my pastime before I fell ill and it was hard for me to think that I would probably never make an excursion again.

The medical diagnosis had been angina pectoris, vascular spasms. The treatment consisted of absolute rest, strict diet, medication. I had been examined very thoroughly by two specialists who employed all the most modern methods of auscultation and diagnosis. They finally came to the conclusion that there was nothing wrong, organically. Several more weeks went by until I was permitted to leave the clinic, with the warning that I must maintain diet and medication, rest as much as possible, and strictly avoid any physical or mental exertion. I was given to understand that a deviation from these rules would be most dangerous and that I should consider myself lucky to be able to maintain this mode of life for the rest of my days. (I was then over fifty.)

During my convalescence I had plenty of time to think and to read. Among the books friends brought me, I found one, in French, on Hatha-Yoga, with glowing promises of health, happiness and peace of mind. Somehow I was impressed, and besides, had nothing to lose. Slowly and gradually I took up some of the exercises prescribed by the book and was greatly surprised to note an almost immediate improvement. In time, I became bolder and worked out a little system of physical and mental exercises which I performed morning and night. Soon I was able to walk a little and, in secret, began to take short, then longer and longer walks. I threw away the remaining medicine and did not renew the prescription.

When, three weeks later, the doctor came to check up on me, I triumphantly announced that I thought I was well again. He examined me, made several tests, and agreed with me that I had greatly improved. It was plain to see that he thought it miraculous. Nevertheless, he urged me to continue the treatment and to be very careful. I had not said a word of my own method. I saw that he was very pleased with himself and I was only too glad to let him have all the credit.

It was not his treatment, however, which I continued, but my own. As I went along I felt the need for more thorough instruction in Yoga. That is when I ran into difficulties. I found all sorts of books and treatises; some were too primitive and downright silly, others too technical and esoteric. Besides, all of them treated only one aspect of the subject. What I wanted and needed was a clear, simple, not too technical, but nevertheless accurate, and above all, complete outline of the whole subject, adapted to western understanding. I was unable to find it and, therefore, determined to write it myself.

Now I walk again and am a different person, in more ways than one. A little less than a year after I was stricken, I climbed a 10,000 foot mountain near the Matterhorn. As I looked out on the hundreds of snowy mountain peaks glittering in the brilliant rays of the rising sun, I praised God and formed the silent wish that others like me would come to know and to practise this most ancient, most potent, most wonderful of remedies for all human ills—YOGA.

Having taken as a bow the great weapon of the Secret Teaching,
One should fix on it the arrow sharpened by Constant Meditation,
Drawing it with a mind filled with THAT,
Penetrate, O good-looking youth, that Imperishable as the mark.

The pranava (Aum) is the bow; the arrow is the self;
Brahman is said to be the mark.
With heedfulness it is to be penetrated.
You should become one with it, as the arrow with the mark.

Mundaka Upanishad II—3-4.

Chapter I

YOGA AND ACTION

YOGA is the Path—It is the path shown us by age—old Hindu-wisdom to find health, happiness and peace of mind not in a nebulous beyond, but here and now.

The great Secret that has come down to us through the ages is as sublime as it is simple. And it is not the special property of Hinduism or indeed of any religion. It is something which is to be found, more or less buried in all religions, and which can exist apart from any formal religion.

The idea has sometimes been expressed that the union with the higher Self, which is the final object of Yoga, cannot be achieved by westerners using eastern methods. Such views are greatly exaggerated and usually based on ignorance of the real facts. They are mostly the product of a time when Yoga was practically unknown in western countries except by a few specialists of Hindu culture who were interested in Yoga mainly from a philological and philosophical viewpoint.

The situation is radically different today. The writings of many eminent teachers of Yoga have been translated, lecturers have disseminated the knowledge, and scores of Yoga-schools have been founded in America and in Europe. As a result of these activities, much of mystery formerly surrounding the theory and practice of Yoga has been dispelled. It has been shown that the differences dwelt upon by some writers are mainly imaginary when they are not the outcome of a desire to propagate a system of their own. To-day, thousands of Yoga-students, all over the world, are here to testify that there are no physical or mental exercises in Yoga which a sound-bodied and sound-minded westerner cannot learn to perform. As far as the physical exercises are concerned, they are, in the main, far easier to execute than some western so-called physical-culture exercises. As for the mental and spiritual exercises, such as concentration, meditation and contemplation, they are by no means the exclusive apanage of eastern wisdom, but belong to all spiritual cultures, particularly to that of the Christian world.

But there is still a good deal of misunderstanding and consequent misinterpretation in regard to Hindu thought, even among otherwise great western minds. As an example, we cite the following statement taken from the book, *Out of my Life and Thought*, by the celebrated Dr Albert Schweitzer, (Mentor Books, p. 119): "To Indian thought all effort directed to triumphs in knowledge and power and to the improvement of man's outer life and of society as a whole is a mere folly. It teaches that the only sensible line of conduct for man is to withdraw entirely into himself to the thought of 'no more will to live', and by abstention from action and by every sort of life-denial reduces his earthly existence to a condition of being, which has no content beyond a waiting for the cessation of being."

Withdrawal, no will to live, abstention from action, life denial, cessation of being,—these are to Dr Schweitzer, and no doubt to other American and European thinkers, the mainsprings of Indian thought, so much so that this opinion has become the generally accepted one in these countries. This is a tragic misunderstanding of the real position, as can be verified by even a cursory examination of the sources of Indian wisdom.

The reason, or at least one of the reasons for the fundamental misunderstanding may be the external method of approach by western scholars to the spiritual classics of Indian thought. As a rule, they are mainly concerned with the history of the text under consideration, its classification and criticism, with who wrote it and to what school he belonged. The follower of the Path, on the other hand, is only interested in direct knowledge and the practical application of the teachings contained in the text and cares but little about who wrote it or with what school the writer was affiliated.

But even so, the meaning of the texts should be clear to everyone. One of the most important of these, and to which any critical appreciation of Indian thought must needs refer, is the Bhagavad Gita, which has been called one foot of the triple base on which the Vedanta is founded, the two other feet being the Upanishads and the Brahma—Sutras.

This fundamental text is rich in injunctions that the battle of life must be won, and not run away from. In order to attain the goal of Union with the Divine Ground (the ultimate goal of Yoga) the method recommended by the Bhagavad Gita is not abstention from action, but on the contrary, skill in action in a spirit of disinterestedness, of indifference to the fruits of action, not detachment from life, but only detachment from the rewards, thus transcending the limits of selfish good and evil. This is the method of Karma-Yoga, one branch of the Path.

As beautifully developed by Sri Krishna Prem in *The Yoga of the Bhagavad Gita*, it is not to be understood that the sense-life is to be negated or outwardly discontinued; it is an inner, not an outer withdrawal that is to be practised. The mind should be purified by the practice of selfless action.

The very doctrine of what is known as Karma-Yoga starts from the fact that a cessation from all action is an impossibility. "Not by mere cessation of activity shall the soul rise to the state of actionlessness", states the Bhagavad Gita. The only difference between action in the western sense and action such as Karma-Yoga envisages, is that for Karma-Yoga action is a sacrifice, a duty; it is "right action" which is to be performed, action in accord with the higher self, action with an ethical content. "As the ignorant act out of attachment to action, so should the wise act without attachment, *desiring the welfare of the world.*" (Bhagavad Gita, 3, 25). We thus see that the thought-basis for the reunion between the "will to progress" and the ethics which Dr Schweitzer so passionately sought and finally found in the idea of "reverence for life" was there all the time. Nowhere is life, in all its forms, held in greater reverence than in

India, and nowhere has the notion of action a higher ethical content than in the teachings of Hinduism, or, for that matter, Buddhism.

The debate finally reduces itself to the question of the *quality* of action. Action in the western sense, deprived of its ethical basis most often, is action for selfish, material purposes, or at best, action for the sake of action. In early Christian times and in the Middle-Ages it was often action "ad majorem Dei gloriam", for the greater glory of God. And this is exactly the type of action taught by Indian thought, in particular by the Yoga of action, Karma-Yoga.

The two main psychological types, according to Jung, are the extrovert and the introvert. The latter's tendency is to occupy himself with the subjective, while the extrovert directs his activity towards the outer world. Corresponding to these two types we have two Yogas, the Yoga of Knowledge and Discrimination, called Jnana-Yoga, and the Yoga of Action, Karma-Yoga.

As we have said, Karma-Yoga starts with the proposition that complete abstention from action is a physical impossibility. On the other hand, we must prevent action from exerting a binding power upon us, we must sever its connection with results. As Jesus said: "What would it avail a man to win the whole world, if thereby he loses his soul?"

The western misunderstanding of the nature of action and its ethical content as proclaimed by Indian thought is thus clearly based on a superficial appreciation of the inner significance of the idea of action. And if anyone, in the spirit of "by their fruit shall ye know them" points to the state of Indian society, today and yesterday, as the practical consequence of Indian negation of action and withdrawal from life, it must not be forgotten that practical results are not necessarily the fruits of ideology alone. It would be shortsighted and unfair to hold an ideology responsible for a state of affairs which may be due to a number of factors, over which it can at best only exercise very partial control. It is questionable, besides, to what extent an ideology, and be it the expression of Immortal Truth itself, can materialize itself within our concept of time. Factors like climate, temperament, demography, political conditions etc. may play an important role.

"In traditional Christianity, as in all the great religious formulations of the Perennial Philosophy, it was axiomatic that contemplation is the end and purpose of action. Today, the great majority, even of professed Christians, regard action directed towards material and social progress as the end." Thus Aldous Huxley, who adds that this is so because to traditional Christianity, as to the other religions, the secret of happiness and the way to salvation were to be sought not in external environment, but in the individual state of mind in regard to the environment. "Today," he says, "the all important thing is not the state of mind but the state of the environment. Happiness and progress depend, it is thought, on bigger, and better gadgets."

Is it not a question whether the "spirit of progress" is not in itself the antithesis of an ethical content of action? Maybe the two just do not go together. As Huxley puts it: "... of course it is only the possessive, the restless, the distracted who spend money on the things that advertisers want to sell. Technological progress is in part the product of a revolution, characterized by aggressivity and lust for power, in part the producer and sustainer of that revolution. So is war ever more closely associated with technological progress. It would seem, therefore, that only an inner progress, directed towards self-realization and action without regard for its fruits can, in time, prepare humanity for outer action that will not be self-destructive ,..." And that is the Indian way. That is the way of Yoga.

"The world is imprisoned in its own activity except when actions are performed as worship of God", says the Bhagavad Gita.

"Action," says Thomas Aquinas, "should be something added to the life of prayer, not something taken away from it, because action unenlightened by contact with reality, uninspired and unguided, consequently is apt to be ineffective and even harmful."

It is the introspective contemplation of the Indian sage which, among other things, has given rise to the misunderstandings about negation of action and life in Indian thought. But it should be clear, that only through contemplation can we acquire the power to act well. "What a man takes in contemplation," says Ekkehard, "that he pours out in love." The container must be replenished. And Al Ghazzali regards the mystic as the salt which preserves human society from decay. Perhaps we could use a few more mystics today. They might preserve the world not only from decay, but from utter destruction.

Chapter 2

YOGA—WHAT IS IT?

A TIBETAN aphorism says: "An art of living enabling us to use every activity of the body, language and spirit as an aid on the Path is indispensable." An art of living, a way of life ... not yet Yoga, but an indispensable aid on the way to it, a preparation for the higher Yogas. This preparation is called Hatha-Yoga.

> *"There is an inmost centre in us all*
> *Where truth abides in fullness; and to know*
> *Rather consists in opening out a way*
> *Whence the imprisoned splendor may escape ..."*
> (Browning)

Opening out a way, that is the method of Hatha-Yoga in preparation of the ultimate realities.

Yoga, the Sanskrit word for yoke or union, can be briefly defined as a religious, philosophical and scientific system, the origins of which are lost in the mist of time. Disciples and teachers of Yoga are to be found to this day in India, Tibet and, occasionally, in China. The adepts of Yoga are called Yogis. The influence of Yoga on Asiatic culture and civilization has been, and is, considerable. In more recent times, Yoga, as a way of life, has spread increasingly to western countries, especially in its preparatory form, Hatha-Yoga, which aims at perfect control of body and mind.

According to Vivekananda, one of the great exponents of Hindu wisdom in modern times, the entire Yoga-Philosophy lies in the precept that it is through ignorance that the soul has been joined with nature and the idea is, therefore, to get rid of nature's control over us. In fact, this is the goal of all religions. It is to manifest the divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal. The Yogi tries to reach this goal through psychic control.

The paths to this goal are various, just as there are infinite ways which lead to the sea of immortality. In Yoga, these paths are called Hatha-Yoga, Karma-Yoga, Jnana-Yoga, Bhakti-Yoga and Raja-Yoga, all of which we shall speak of in turn. In view of the fact that Hatha-Yoga is the preparation for all the higher Yogas, and because it is most accessible to western habits of thought, we shall devote an important part of this book to it.

Sivananda, the great modern Indian Saint, gives the following definition: The word "Yoga" means union between Jivatma and Paravatma (individual soul and supreme soul). The science which teaches the way of acquiring this occult knowledge is called Yoga-Shastra. Hatha-Yoga concerns the physical body and control of breath. Raja-Yoga deals with the mind. Raja-Yoga and Hatha-Yoga are necessary counter-parts of each other. No one can become a perfect Yogi without the knowledge of the practices of both. Raja-Yoga begins where properly practiced Hatha-Yoga ends.

Hatha is a compound word formed of the two syllables, ha and tha. Ha means the sun and tha means the moon. These correspond to the breath which flows through the left (Ida) and right (Pingala) nostrils. Hatha-Yoga, taken in a narrower sense, teaches the way to unite the sun and the moon through regulation of breath.

"Women also should practise Yoga-Asanas. They will have healthy and strong children. If mothers are healthy and strong, children also will be healthy and strong. The regeneration of young women means the regeneration of the whole world. Women who practise a course of Asanas systematically, with interest and attention, will have wonderful health and vitality. I hope they will give patient hearing to my earnest and sincere prayer and start practising the Asanas from the very day they read the Yogi lessons. Glory to these women who tread the Path of Yoga!" Sivananda.

Hatha-Yoga deals entirely with the physical body. It is not a religion or a mystic cult. It is really a technique, a

"Know-How", a sort of psycho-physiological gymnastics. The great and essential difference between Hatha-Yoga and all the western physical-culture systems consists of the fact that Hatha-Yoga is not an end in end in itself, but a preparation to a higher end; it is to deliver us from ignorance. Another difference is that while Hatha-Yoga deals with the body, it is in order to overcome the body. In working with the body, it is the mind we aim at in Hatha-Yoga, both the conscious and unconscious mind. It is to give us such mastery of the body that it will not stand in the way of spiritual development.

Hatha-Yoga, like the other Yogas, is, therefore, less a doctrine than a method. Its ultimate goal is mystic and aims at the preparation of the soul to enter into union with God. In a way, this is the goal of all religions, but Yoga is not in itself a religion. Its method is not bound to any dogma or ritual and it may be practised by adherents of any religion, or even by those who adhere to no religion at all. There are many Christian Yogis.

True, there are many Yogis whose aim is less noble. They see in the practice of Yoga merely a means to acquiring certain supernatural powers, such as the power of levitation.

The technique itself consists of a system of training in various degrees. At the top degree, the training is purely spiritual, at the bottom, purely physical, both mental and physical at the intermediate level. The two latter, as we have said, continue a preparation for the purely spiritual training.

To occidental eyes, the importance lent to the physical side of the training may seem contradictory to the final goal of Yoga, which is mystical. The immediate object of the first part of the training seems opposed to this, as being purely materialistic in nature, maintenance or re-establishment of health, prolongation of youth, development of the will,—all things which seem to be very much of this world. The contradiction is, however, more apparent than real.

To Hatha-Yoga, pain and ill-health, preoccupation with poverty, worry and all sorts of moral suffering are insurmountable handicaps to spiritual development. Before, therefore, taking the path that leads to union with the divine ground of being, it becomes necessary to learn how to live. For this reason, we have called Hatha-Yoga a technique of the art of living. True mysticism is realistic, and this is a lesson which the Occident might well learn from the Orient.

Not everyone has the mystic vocation, but everyone would like to learn how to maintain good health and, in a general way, to be as happy as possible. The wonderful advantages to be gained from the practice of Hatha-Yoga, in a purely material sense, could not fail to impress, and thus an ever greater number of people sought in the practice of Hatha-Yoga immediate and practical benefits. In such a way, a sort of popular Yoga was created, the widespread practice of which has exercised a strong influence on the development of Asiatic civilization. If Orientals strike us with their calm demeanour, their self-mastery, it is in no small degree to be ascribed to this influence, and not to any particularity of their physical or moral constitution.

The practice of this popular Yoga has remained for a long time a purely individual matter. Since a number of years, however, instruction in the practice of Hatha-Yoga is given in special institutions in India without any particular preoccupation of a religious or philosophical order, somewhat resembling schools of physical culture in America and Europe, although the methods used in Yoga schools differ widely. Similar schools have only recently been founded in Europe.

The practice of such a popular form of Yoga without any admixture of religious and philosophical considerations would, no doubt, be of great benefit in occidental countries. Our scientific and technical civilization has produced prodigious results, of which we can be justly proud, but it is certain that the ever increasing nervous and mental tension our civilization implies, has need of some sort of counterweight, without which a rupture of the balance seems inevitable. This counter-weight might well be found in Hatha-Yoga.

Yoga—What is it?

As we have mentioned at the beginning, it is often asserted that the Yoga exercises have been devised by and for Orientals, whose physical structure is different from ours, and that for this reason they are dangerous for us. This assertion is completely unfounded. The organic make-up of men all over the world is exactly the same. The pretended differences between different races are, at most, quite superficial. As to the fear of danger connected with the practice of Hatha-Yoga, it is based on pusillanimity; nothing we do is quite without danger; it is dangerous to fly, to drive, to walk. And even if one abstains from these practices and remains at home, there is always the danger of accidents, more frequent at home than abroad, as insurance statistics show.

The fact is that the practice of Yoga, in its popular form, is far less dangerous than the practice of any western form of sport, not to speak of American football. The Yoga exercises, both physical and mental which will be described in these pages are not only *not* dangerous, they are supremely efficacious and of easy execution, accessible to people of all ages and of both sexes. Their practise only takes a few minutes a day, and once the habit has been formed, they leave an impression not of fatigue, like ordinary physical exercises, but of relaxation and wonderful refreshment.

Chapter 3

BACK TO NATURE

THE popular Hatha-Yoga exercises can be divided into two groups; the first one will teach you to live in conformity with the laws of nature; and the exercises of the second group have as their goal the conscious control of physical and mental activities, which normally are not subject to such control.

To live in conformity with the laws of nature does not necessarily mean to live in a simple and frugal manner. The meaning here is different. The old masters of Yoga held that for many a century, men have lost the habit of living in conformity with the organic laws of their species. The result was a physical degeneration with its sequel of sickness and infirmity and a considerable shortening of the normal life-span.

Two examples will justify the theory of the old masters of Yoga. It is a fact that the fossilized heads of primitive men never show the slightest trace of tooth decay. This degenerative disease has made its appearance only in relatively recent times, evidently from the time when man ceased to nourish himself in a natural manner. Rheumatism also is a relatively late acquisition of humanity. Ancient skeletons show no trace of this illness. Wild animals do not suffer from it, while domesticated animals, sharing our living conditions, are subjected to it.

The exercises of the second group aim at the development of a number of latent, as yet unexplored possibilities of human nature.

We are, as a rule, aware of what happens outside of us and are able to direct, to a certain extent, this activity. But we are unaware of what goes on within us and we have no direct influence upon the functioning of our internal organs. If we did not learn it in an indirect and exterior manner through the study of anatomy and physiology, we would hardly know that we possess a liver or a heart, nor would we have any knowledge of the digestive functions or of the circulation of the blood in the human body. This is so because we have no direct perception of these functions, nor do we have any influence on them. We are unable either to start them or to stop them; we can neither accelerate them nor slow them down through simple volition.

The same is true of our knowledge of our interior moral world. How do we think and reason? What are the secret springs of our emotions and feelings? We do not know, or at most, we have only theories about these processes. And we are also without direct influence upon this mysterious world. If you doubt this, just try, for instance, to concentrate for only five minutes upon a single and unique subject.

The goal of the second group of Yoga-exercises is to teach us to perceive directly what is going on in our interior mental and moral world and to direct it consciously and voluntarily.

In comparison with the so-called civilized man of today, primitive man, in spite of his great, but as yet undeveloped possibilities, was an animal. Like all the other animals, he lived instinctively in conformity with his nature. In view of his intellectual superiority, he soon adopted, however, a mode of life which distinguished him radically from other animals. In one word, he became civilized, and through civilization, he acquired immense advantages, but in return, lost others, among them, some of his instincts. Mentally,as well as morally, he ceased to be an animal.

In spite of this, he remained an animal as far as his physiological constitution is concerned. The human body has not followed the human mind in its evolution. The result has been a sort of dissonance between the two, which, in turn, resulted in a veritable physical degeneration, because of the fact that man has ceased to live in conformity with the natural laws of his species.

We have already given two examples of this degenerative process. We shall cite another of a more general nature. Let us compare human life with that of the cat. Although the cat is not a wild animal, it is also not, strictly speaking, a domestic animal. It shares our civilized life without quite becoming a part of it, like a drop of oil in a glass of water, and thereby escapes its flaws. Excepting accidental death, the normal life-span of the cat is fourteen years. It is fully developed at one year of age. During the approximately ten years of mature life which follows, it shows practically no change either in appearance or in activity and reproductive power. After a period of one to two years of old age, it dies a normal death.

Let us compare the life of the cat with human life. Man has a period of development of from eighteen to twenty years, then a period which we may call youth, of about the same duration, followed by a period of maturity of about twenty years, and finally, a period of old age of variable duration, but which exceptionally may prolong itself to a hundred years and even a little beyond.

Instead of the cat, we might have chosen almost any mammal for the sake of comparison. With few small variations, we find that they all have a period of maturity of about ten times the period of development and a span of old age of about the same length as that of development. Man is the only exception to this rule.

If human life followed the same pattern as that of the other mammals, its duration would be about two hundreds years, and between the periods of development and of old age, man would enjoy a span of mature strength and activity of about one hundred and fifty years.

A cat, probably because it is less domesticated, is practically never sick or, if it falls ill, the illness is usually so serious that it dies from it. Man on the other hand, apart from serious illnesses, rarely enjoys perfect health. He suffers from a multitude of minor affections such as colds, grippe, constipation, digestive disorders, tooth-ache, female troubles etc. ... A complete list would take up a lot of space and a humorous doctor justly put it this way: "Health is an abnormal state which worries me."

Modern science and hygiene have thus far not been able to modify this rather unfavourable picture. It is true that according to statistics, the average duration of human life has been prolonged, but this is mainly due to the reduction of infant mortality. We must not confuse average duration with normal duration. The statistics of the average human life-span are further improved by the fact that the period of old age today is considerably longer. A man or a woman who has reached the age of sixty, has a better chance, nowadays, of attaining the age of eighty or over, but that does not make them any younger. It would be far more interesting to prolong the periods of youth and maturity than to prolong that of old age.

As far as illnesses are concerned, it would not seem that in spite of the advances made by medical science, there has been real progress. Certain diseases are in regression, it is true, but others are in progression. When one side of the scale goes down, the other goes up. In northern countries the death rate from tuberculosis has fallen, but that of cancer has risen. The same is true of a number of minor infections. We do not mean to say that man today is sick more often than in the days of his father or grandfather, but he is ill just as often, but not quite in the same way. That does not mean either that science may not, some day, succeed in prolonging the useful span of human life or in ridding it of most of the ills that beset it today. We do not mean to prejudge the future, but we must admit that thus far, science has not succeeded in so doing.

Chapter 4

PHYSICAL AND MORAL CONDITIONS OF YOGA TRAINING

YOGA training re-educates our vital instincts and thereby it tends to lead us back to the normal physiological condition of human nature and thus to rid us of a host of physical ills, to prolong youth and the span of a useful, active life.

You have perhaps heard that certain Yogis have lived several hundred years. This is not the place to investigate the authenticity of such claims, but we can attest that the disciples of Hatha-Yoga, as a rule, enjoy splendid health and maintain all of their physiological and mental faculties up to a ripe old age.

There are, of course, individual differences of success here as everywhere else. While not everybody can become a champion, it is certain that the practice of Yoga will, in any and every case, be of great advantage. The extent of success depends, in part, upon the student's natural disposition and to a perhaps even greater part, upon the method that is being followed. It must, above all things, be remembered that Yoga has nothing in common with the systems of physical culture such as they are being practised in Europe and America. Their aim is muscular development; their ideal is the formation of athletes. The aim of Yoga is entirely different.

According to Hatha-Yoga, the mechanism of life depends mainly upon the two currents of force, one positive (Ha), the other negative (Tha), like the two poles of an electric current. The balance of these two currents assures the perfect functioning of the vital mechanism. When there is a lack of balance, it functions badly or ceases to function. The aim of Hatha-Yoga is the maintenance or, if necessary, the re-establishment of the balance between the two currents, and that not only in one part of the organism, like the musculature, but in all its parts.

As a tree is judged by its fruits, so the doctrine of the ancient masters of Yoga is judged by its results. Yoga does not form athletes, but well-rounded human beings.

This notion of balance is, in a way, the soul of the whole system of Hatha-Yoga. We have already mentioned that the training consists of physical, as well as mental exercises. According to Hatha-Yoga there is complete solidarity between mental, moral and physical balance, like the solidarity which exists between the hands of a clock and its wheels. It has become trivial to say that the mind influences the body and vice-versa; it is a constantly repeated slogan, but no western educational system that we know of takes it into account. Yoga on the other hand, makes the widest possible use of this truth which it considers one of its fundamental principles. Even the simplest exercises, which seem to be of an exclusively physical nature have a mental side to them. It is called "attention". To pay attention seems to imply a positive effort, an effort of the will. This tension of the will is, in fact, more a hindrance than an aim to real attention. What is needed is much more a negative effort, the elimination of all ideas foreign to the object we have in mind. It is not a positive effort which is required for the perfect execution of Yoga exercises, but rather the exclusion, as far as possible, of any thoughts or ideas that would interfere with what we are doing. We say "as far as possible" because if you were really able to think exclusively of the task in hand, if you were master of your thoughts and ideas, then you would need no further instruction; you would be a perfect Yogi.

All human enterprise is habitually accompanied by desire and fear, the desire to succeed, the fear of not succeeding. These feelings, however, are negative, and must, as far as possible, be eliminated. They are a source of distraction which waste a part of the nervous energy which should be used exclusively in the execution of the enterprise. The emotion of fear, the feeling of apprehension, is more dangerous even than the desire to succeed, inasmuch as it exercises a depressing and paralysing influence. But even the desire to succeed, while it exercises a dynamic and toxic action is to be avoided, since it turns the attention from the present to the future.

The ideal mental attitude is one of complete emotional neutrality, the attitude of a neutral spectator. The Yoga exercises should be performed as though by someone else, as though by a person whose success or failure were a matter of indifference to you. This mental attitude, once understood, can be attained with patience and practice. It will be of great help to you, not only in the practice of Yoga, but in all your actions, whether it be the passing of an exam or the conclusion of a business deal. It is an attitude of detachment from the fruits of action which exercises a liberating action.

It is best to practise alone, in a quiet place, in the nude or as lightly clad as possible. While this may not be always easy to accomplish, at least the approximation of the ideal solution will be found. Of course, if the services of a competent teacher are available, progress will be more rapid, although even then it will be found profitable to exercise and to study alone at times, for reasons which you will come to understand later.

What is the best time to practise? The Yoga tradition indicates the hour before sunrise, midday and sunset as the most favourable times. While this is unquestionably true, there is nothing rigid about it and these rules can and may be adapted to circumstances. A person disposing freely of his time may follow the above rule to great advantage. Another may be able to practise in the morning before breakfast and in the evening before retiring. The important thing is to incorporate the practice of Yoga into the daily schedule like the bath, cleaning one's teeth or shaving, so that Yoga practice will become an inalterable, indispensable habit.

Remember that the advantages in health and happiness to be gained from this habit are so important that no initial effort is too great. We say "initial effort" because once the habit is established, it will by itself, become an indispensable and cherished part of the daily routine. All that is necessary, in fact, is to rise a half hour earlier than usual. This may be easier said than done, but it is the condition that cannot be dispensed with. And if you find that you cannot do without those thirty minutes of sleep, why not go to bed thirty minutes earlier?

Fifteen to twenty minutes in the morning and fifteen minutes in the evening are enough to begin with. Who wouldn't give that much time when a sense of well-being, of increased vitality, of a hitherto unknown zest for life, of a constantly growing awareness of being on the threshold of discoveries touching at the very questions of life and death are at stake? Give that much time to Yoga *regularly* and Yoga will make up for it a thousand times over. Many people have reluctantly done so and have said later on: "Why haven't we heard of this before?" But it is never too late to begin. One of the most wonderful things about the practice of Yoga is that the time given to it, the effort made, whether big or small, will show definite and certain results practically from the first moment you devote to it. Very soon you will consider it the most important part of your daily life, without which you simply could not do any more.

Still remains the "how" of Yoga. The conditions under which the exercises are carried out play an important role in the progress to be accomplished. But while it may be of advantage to begin the training in the spring, between the new moon and the full moon, i.e. during an ascending moon phase, turned northward for standing exercises, with the head towards the north and the feet to the south in lying-down exercises, all these rules, after all, are of minor importance. If you can do the exercises in the open air, all the better. Otherwise see to it that your practice-room be well aired and that the temperature be neither too warm nor too cold. More important is to practise with an empty stomach, either before or two hours after a meal. Bladder and intestine should be unencumbered. Start only when your mind and body are tranquil and calm. Use a rug, blanket or cover for your exercises in order to isolate yourself against the radiations of the earth. Use this rug or cover for nothing else; all the better if it be white.

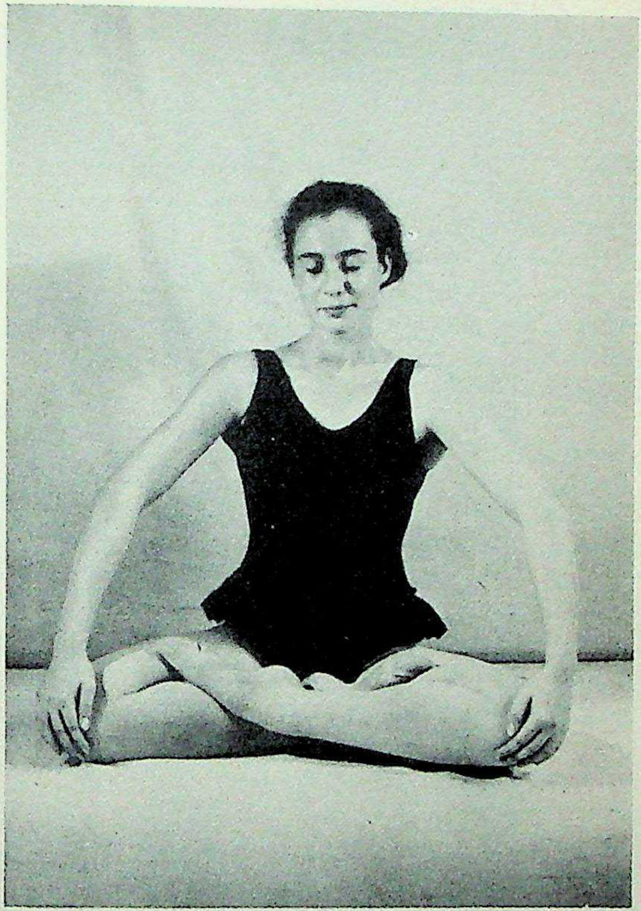


FIG. 1—PADMASANA—LOTUS-SEAT

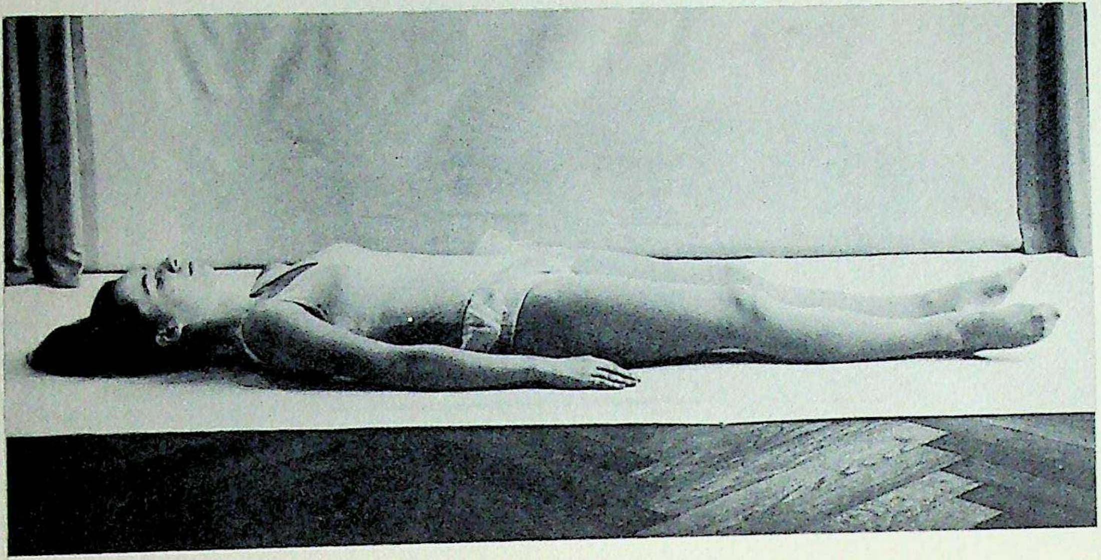


FIG. 3—SAVASANA—COMPLETE RELAXATION

Chapter 5

THE IDEA OF BALANCE

WE distinguish between two kinds of balance, static balance and dynamic balance. The static balance is the state in which the forces acting on a body neutralize themselves so that the body stays indefinitely in the same position, until a new force disturbs this state of balance. Dynamic balance, on the other hand, results from a harmonious balance of forces, in the execution of work, for instance, in such a way that the maximum of efficiency results from a minimum of expenditure of energy.

Apart from this we must make a distinction between stable and unstable balance, two terms which explain themselves. We finally distinguish between a natural and an unnatural balance. Of all the different kinds of balance an animated body can assume, only a few are compatible with its vital functioning and there is only one which enables it to function under the best possible conditions. This is the state of natural balance. A potted plant will always grow in a vertical direction towards the light, no matter how often you change the position of the pot.

Animals also have a state of natural balance in which they live in conformity with their nature. In the vertebrate, the normal balance is conditioned by the position of the spinal column. In man the spinal column is vertical. The vertical posture distinguishes man from the other mammals, while, rather strangely, it makes him resemble plants.

The three main postures a human body can assume are the standing, sitting and lying position. The problem of balance becomes particularly complicated in the standing position. The problem of balance in this position is, at best, precarious, and the maintenance of the balance implies an expenditure of force with corresponding fatigue. Animals, thanks to their quadrilateral suspension are favoured by better balance, whether in movement or in repose. Animals seem to know instinctively how to assume positions of stable equilibrium. The cat, for instance, is a marvel of balance in any position. If man ever possessed the balancing instinct, he has by now lost most of it. Although there are individual differences, man in general seems to stand in a position of permanent instability. This stabilizing effort may well be at the root of much nervous fatigue and influence the moral and mental attitude of many people. The measure of individual stability can very well be taken in standing and walking, both eyes closed. The longer you can stand or walk this way, the better your natural balance. The re-education of our natural sense of balance is important from the standpoint of better mental health and working efficiency.

The human skeleton is an architectural marvel in its perfect stability, provided that in every attitude, the relative positions of the various elements correspond to their natural purpose. The weakness of the skeleton resides in the mobility of the articulations. This flexibility is necessary, but we make use of it more or less adroitly, as is shown by the frequency of bad posture.

As we have seen, the natural balance of the human body follows, like that of the plants, a vertical direction. More exactly, in order that perfect balance be achieved, the axis of gravity must pass through the body following a straight line through the top of the head and the "mula", the root between the legs. This is the ideal posture. When the upper part of the body leans forward, or when the shoulders sag, the balance is disturbed and with it also the balance of the internal organs. Instead of being maintained in their natural place by means of their weight alone, like the materials of a well constructed wall, they are kept in place through unconscious muscular contractions with corresponding loss of energy. Bad posture is often the cause of diseases of these organs. In order to re-establish perfect balance and posture, it is often sufficient to turn the palms of the hands frontward or outward, as in this way, the axis of gravity follows the straight line mentioned above.

The Idea of Balance

One of the primary conditions of good health resides in good posture, the naturally balanced posture for which our body has been constructed. A certain amount of effort and patience is needed to correct bad habits of posture. Whether standing or sitting, we should keep in mind the importance of correct posture and rectify it. Soon we will do so quite unconsciously. Good habits are formed as easily as bad ones. To achieve a correct body posture in a very short time, it is a good idea to stand and walk for a while with the palms of the hands turned frontwards. You will notice immediately that everything "falls into place", so to speak, that the biceps also are turned outward, that the elbows turn backward and rest easily on the side of the body. Since the wrists are very flexible, you can turn them any way you like, once the correct, natural posture is well understood, without changing the position of the arms, so that the biceps remain forward and the elbows to the back.

PERFECT POSTURE

In this natural posture, a real effort is needed to bend the upper part of the body or the shoulders. The straight, vertical and well-balanced posture, once taken, is easily recognized as the normal one, and one which corresponds with the least effort and the least fatigue. In action as in repose, it imparts elasticity and elegance to the body.

Children should be taught the habit of correct posture from a very early age, so that later on they will assume it naturally and as by instinctive reflex action. The same is true in the practice of any sport. All movements executed in a position of unstable balance are decidedly harmful to the body. Many a record would be beaten if this primordial condition of balance were respected.

One of the first Hatha-Yoga exercises is intended to re-educate the natural instinct of balance. Like most of the Yoga exercises, it is a posture, a position which, once assumed, must be maintained for a certain length of time. It is called "tree-posture" because the person performing it resembles a tree in outline. In this position we stand on one foot and the problem of balance is therefore before us in its most difficult form. The mastery of this exercise will automatically insure perfect balance.

The exercise of the tree-posture is most easily carried out by placing oneself near a table on which to lean, if necessary. In standing on the right foot, we assume to begin with the correct posture on two feet, as described above; we thereupon support ourselves lightly with the left hand at the table, slowly lifting the left knee, so that the leg will stand out diagonally. Now seize your left foot with your right hand and place it high upon the right leg. Now let go of the table and, with elbows on body, join your hands in front of the chest as is done in praying. You maintain this position for as long as you can and then change legs.

In doing this exercise, the body should be maintained as much as possible in the line of gravity. The posture seems simple, but is not so easy to assume correctly, although with a little patience and good humour, you will soon succeed. As soon as this is the case, you can vary it in holding the hands above the head, or sideways, bending the body backward, forward and sideways, without losing your balance. The foot is to be changed each time and you can also practise the tree-posture with eyes closed.

As is the case with all Yoga exercises, the tree posture does not demand as much of an immediate effort as western "setting-up" exercises do. They rather require patience and attention. This is one of the reasons why Yoga exercises leave you with a sensation of calm and well-being.

The tree posture has been devised to give back to you the lost instinct of balance and a sense of physical poise, soon accompanied by an equal sense of mental poise.

BALANCE IN WALKING

Chapter 6

EVERYBODY walks, or almost, but few walk well. We have all been taught to walk, but most of the time we have been taught badly. A child is taught to know how to walk when he can take himself from one place to another without falling. Only the result counts. How he does it is not considered important. This is why every child develops his own method of walking. Whether this method is good, bad or indifferent is purely a question of chance. A little observation will prove this: One child walks with the points of his feet turned outwards, another inwards; one moves his legs from the hips, another from the knee etc. Of a certain number of children, hardly two follow the same method. This is the reason why practically all of us have to relearn how to walk, i.e. to walk well, in conformity with the natural laws of our species. Again, as in standing, it is a question of balance, of static balance and dynamic balance. The first condition of a graceful, natural way of walking, is static balance of the body and we have seen how to obtain this. The second condition is dynamic balance.

The natural way of walking for man is really a falling forward, continually arrested and renewed. It should not be, as it is far too often, an imitation of the walk of quadrupeds, which is a sort of creeping. Monkeys are climbers and even in walking in a horizontal line, as the primates do, they use the same movements as in climbing vertically. Man is the only real biped.

When we analyze the human manner of walking, we see that when the movement begins with the left foot, the weight of the body rests entirely on the right foot and that the body pivots on the forward part of the sole of the right foot as though it were about to fall forward. As soon as the balance is about to be lost, the left leg, slightly bent at the knee, comes forward to stop the fall and the weight of the body shifts to the left member. The right leg, which has remained behind, gives an impulsion in a forward direction and thus brings about another pivoting of the body, this time on the left foot. And thus the walk continues by successive transfers of the body weight from one leg to the other.

On flat ground at least, the progression is assured merely by a transfer of balance. The same is the case in walking downhill. Walking uphill is something else again. Here a supplementary effort is required and this effort should be a propulsion of the rear leg. Our legs correspond to the hind-legs of animals, which are organs of propulsion. Yet another condition has to be fulfilled for the effort made in walking to be reduced to the strictest minimum possible: the rhythm of the movement of the legs should be in harmony with their length. The law of the movement of the legs corresponds to that of the oscillation of a pendulum, which is the same for a given length of string. For example, the oscillation of a pendulum a yard long is about one second. The same rule applies to the movement of the legs. The duration of each step should harmonize with their length. No arithmetic is necessary, however, in order to determine the rhythm of your steps. If you lean on one leg and let the other one balance freely, you will observe the oscillation and can regulate the rhythm of your steps accordingly. This is your natural walking rhythm which you should adopt and retain always, no matter how fast you walk. And this is what we mean by dynamic balance in walking. Walking in accordance with this law saves a lot of energy and will make you an excellent walker. The habit of proper rhythm must, of course become as automatic as a reflex action. A little practice will soon give you the idea. In dancing also, as in running, it is this principle of dynamic balance which plays the predominant role.

Chapter 7

HOW TO SIT

THE sitting position should be a position of rest. This is in reality only rarely the case, judging from the contortions of most people in their seats. Perhaps they rest, but they rest badly. About all that can be said of them is that they take the weight off their feet. This is due to the fact that the upper part of the body is not in proper balance, that is to say that the centre of gravity does not follow a straight line, but is being shifted either forward or backward, or sideways.

In the case of a normally seated person, the axis of gravity should meet the floor in the centre of the square formed by the four feet of the chair. This, as you can easily observe for yourself, is seldom the case and the acrobatics that some people perform in order to maintain themselves in a state of precarious balance looks like everything else but rest. With this much said, it is easily understood that the frequent habit of sitting with legs crossed is contrary to the laws of balance. Only sitting as described will insure proper rest; otherwise you might just as well keep walking.

Now, whether we sit down to rest or to work, the rule is the same with certain adaptations, according to the kind of work to be performed. You will be astonished to observe the immediate improvement in well-being and in the ease and quality of your work, if your sitting posture follows the simple rule of natural balance. This is so because the energy uselessly spent in maintaining an unstable balance is saved.

What we have said applies to the sitting position on a seat, such as a chair etc., which is the usual thing in western countries and more and more even in the east. There exists, however, a more primitive and also a more natural sitting position which is still being assumed by hundreds of millions of people and which is also the most restful, the squatting seat, more poetically called the lotus-seat in India, or the perfect posture, in Sanskrit: Padmasana. The flower of the lotus is, in India, the symbol of mental purity and of a fully developed consciousness. Like the flower of the lotus in its pure white beauty, is the perfect balance and symmetry of Padmasana.

In order to take the lotus-seat, we sit on the floor, or on a flat cushion, a rug or cover, place the right foot on the left thigh, the left foot across on the right thigh. The more we press the foot backwards against the stomach, the better we shall succeed in obtaining the right posture (see Fig. 1). The arms fall naturally, elbows back, hands placed one into the other or on the knees, eyes straight ahead, preferably closed. The position of the feet may be reversed and it is a good idea to reverse the position from time to time. If this posture seems too difficult, there is another easier version called Sidhasana, the posture of meditation. For this we sit down, draw the left foot up towards the right groin, then place the right foot across the left one, so that the right foot rests on, or near the left thigh.

After some practice, this position will be found extraordinarily reposeful, not only for the body, but also for the mind. The physical balance it confers extends automatically to the mental balance. It is especially favourable for meditation, reading or study, as it facilitates concentration. If it were adopted at school, there would be fewer distracted pupils and turbulent class-rooms!

This posture conserves the balance of the positive and negative currents traversing our body. Padmasana is the best posture for the breathing exercises which are executed in a sitting position. While we sit thus motionless, breathing easily, we discipline our thoughts and concentrate ourselves consciously upon the heart. In this way, we accumulate a store of energy, like water in a dammed-up river. Not thinking, not speaking and not acting are the creators of mighty positive forces.

In the chapter on the Asanas, the Yoga postures, we shall refer to this posture again.

Chapter 8

A DYNAMIC CONCEPTION OF LIFE

THE current conception of life as adopted by occidental science (a conception which, incidentally, is about to undergo a change) is static. The conception of Yoga is dynamic. As perceived by our senses, a living being cannot be distinguished from an inanimate object except, perhaps, through the former's capacity for movement. But machines also are capable of movement and still they are not living beings. The difference is somewhere else. An inanimate object, a chair for instance, is more or less permanent in form, colour, weight etc. through the permanence of the matter of which it is made. The molecules which compose it, molecules of wood, metal etc. have not changed since it was made. In a month, in a year, excepting accident, they will still be the same.

The case of a living being is quite different. Its material components change continually. The millions of cells of which it is formed are maintained stable only by a means of a constant balancing of birth and death; every instant some of the cells die and some others are born. During their short existence, these cells are at work assimilating and transmuting, ceaselessly shedding their material elements, molecules and atoms and replacing them by new ones. While outwardly the living being will seem the same in six months or a year, in reality it will be composed of an entirely new set of molecules and atoms. It is therefore not the matter we perceive which goes to form a living being, it is something which the senses cannot perceive, some sort of perpetually active force which, according to an invariable plan, groups and organizes an enormous number of constantly changing material elements.

This is what we understand by a dynamic conception of life such as that adopted by Yoga. The practice of Yoga can only be conceived from this angle and should, under no circumstances, be adjusted to a static conception of life.

A living body can be compared to a machine. Such a comparison is faulty at best, since a machine does not reconstruct and renew itself as does a living body. The best comparison seems to be that with an electric motor. Electricity resembles the vital force called Prana by Yoga, especially as concerns its double polarization, positive and negative.

The perfect functioning of an electric motor depends upon two factors: (1) the state of its mechanical parts and (2) the current it receives. Likewise, the health of a living body depends (1) on the good condition of its organs and (2) on a current of vital force or energy adapted to the structure and capacity of its organs. Western medicine, so far, has busied itself mainly with the first one of these conditions while the ancient oriental tradition was concerned principally with the second factor. The two factors should in no way be opposed to each other. On the contrary, they complete each other and the fusion of the two elements, the static and the dynamic, will go a long way towards the creation of a complete medical science, like two halves that make a whole.

In any event, theory and practice of Hatha-Yoga are only interested in the dynamic concept of health. There again we are in the presence of a vital difference between the conceptions of Hatha-Yoga and that of modern western science. The latter studies only the physical world, matter and the forces which set it in motion. In other words, its only object is the study of phenomena that can be perceived normally through the senses. If there is anything beyond what the sense organs can perceive, science neither denies nor affirms it, but considers it a question for philosophers and not for scientists.

The masters of Yoga, on the other hand, were of the opinion that the physical world which we perceive through our sense organs is doubled by a semi-material, fluid world which, at least under normal conditions, cannot be perceived by the senses. It is the world of Prana.

Briefly, Prana has two aspects. The first is that of a substance which, without being matter, is its equivalent. The second aspect is that of an energy or vital force. It is in this narrower sense that the expression, Prana, is generally understood. Since Yoga considers the Universe as being alive in its totality as well as in all its parts, Prana is the cosmic, vital force which animates all living beings. Our individual life is only a particularized case of universal life.

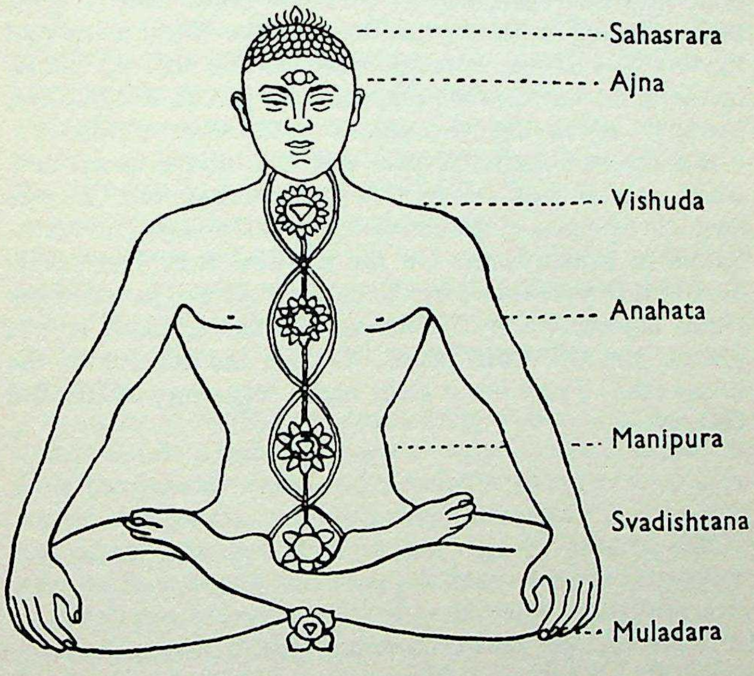


Fig. 2—"THE CHAKRAS"

The pranic force is present in two forms, one positive, the other negative, a distinction which electricity has made familiar, but which was known to Asiatic civilization from time immemorial.

Living beings obtain their pranic force through the organs of their pranic or ethereal body, which, like the physical body, assimilates and disassimilates. The pranic organs which enable us to assimilate Prana are called Nadis, or conductors, of which, one, Pingala, is the positive conductor and Ida, the negative one. Pingala communicates with the positive exterior pranic milieu at a point of the ethereal body corresponding to the right nostril, Ida, to the left nostril.

In Yoga literature, you will frequently encounter the word Chakra (wheel). These Chakras are organs of the ethereal body of which there are six principal ones, namely *Ajna*, corresponding in the physical body to the pineal gland and the brain, *Vishuda*, corresponding to the thyroid gland, *Anahata*, the heart, *Manipura*, the solar plexus, *Svadishtana*, above the sex organs, and *Muladara*, the sacral plexus.

It is the two Nadis, Pingala and Ida, above mentioned, which provide the Chakras with pranic energy. The Chakras have the function of accumulators, transformers and distributors of pranic force. On the physical side, this pranic organism is represented by the nervous system, in which the Nadis correspond to the nerves and the Chakras to the plexus. The two main Nadis, Pingala and Ida follow the spinal cord. There are a great many secondary Nadis and Chakras.

Chapter 9

THE MUDRAS

THE sage, Swami Swatmarana, compared the knowledge of the Mudras to the possession of a chest full of diamonds. He recommended the greatest discretion in imparting to others the secret of their power. The Mudras combine the posture exercises (Asanas) amd breathing exercises (Pranayama) with psychic exercises. These latter aim at the conscious perception of the pranic organs, or Chakras, and at subjecting them to the action of the will.

A conscious perception of the Chakras is possible because unconsciously we are already in communication with these organs of our ethereal body through certain sensations. By means of appropriate exercises, these sensations can be made conscious. This is achieved mainly through mental concentration.

In order to facilitate concentration, it is necessary to put ourselves into a state of passive receptivity through isolation from the exterior world and through a slowing-down of the stream of thoughts and ideas which ceaselessly flow through our minds. The ideal state of affairs would be to be able to stop the flow altogether, a very difficult thing to do. Certain physical procedures help us to achieve this, such as complete relaxation, certain postures we shall describe later, and finally, breathing exercises, controlled rhythmical breathing.

Whether we are aware of it or not, the flow of our thoughts is accompanied by muscular contractions, especially of the small muscles of the face, the neck, the abdomen and the hands. Complete muscular relaxation (see chapter on Relaxation) is followed by a slowing-down or even suspension of the thought-stream.

Combined with muscular relaxation are certain sitting postures like the lotus-seat, or Sidhasana, of which we have already spoken. These are of great help in the control of our thoughts. A further aid is Pranayama, the controlled, rhythmical breathing method which we shall discuss later on.

The psychology of concentration-training involves the use of the symbolic sickle mentioned by Tibetan Yogis. This consists of cutting off the thoughts as they arise in the mind, the same as you would cut grass with a sickle. The concentration of the mind upon the Chakras and their functioning is achieved by means of the Mudras, of which there are a great many. We shall describe here only the most important ones which are sufficient to attain a voluntary control of the Chakras.

The simplest of the Mudras is called *Sambhavi-Mudra.* For this we take the lotus-seat or Sidhasana. We breathe easily, according to a certain rhythm adapted to our stage of progress, for instance inhaling on six beats, retaining the breath for four beats and exhaling in six beats. All strain should be strictly avoided, as the attention must remain free. In thus breathing easily, we relax all our muscles, close the eyes and fix our gaze mentally upon the space between the eyes, at the root of the nose, seat of the pineal gland or eye of the soul, seat of Ajna-Chakra.

If this exercise is correctly executed, you will soon arrive at a more or less complete temporary silencing of the stream of thought, which is perfect concentration. At the same time you will perceive, at the point you mentally gaze at, the seat of Ajna-Chakra, a curious sensation, hard to describe, very agreeable, and which resembles warmth.

The exercise should not be prolonged at the beginning. Remember that complete relaxation, easy and balanced sitting posture, rhythmical breathing, silencing of thought and perfect concentration are essential to success. As in all Yoga exercises, all straining should be avoided. Stop the second you get tired. Keep on practising with regularity, fidelity and patience, gradually extending the period of concentration and success,—the perception of Ajna—will surely come. The first indication of approaching success will be certain phenomena like the feeling of warmth, the appearance of a luminous point or a brilliant eye, its gaze directed towards you, or concentric rings of colour, usually yellow and violet, shrinking and expanding with the rhythm of your breathing.

Thus you will learn consciously to perceive Ajna-Chakra, also called the eye of Shiva, precisely because of the form in which it appears. As we have mentioned, the organ of the physical body corresponding to Ajna is the pineal gland which, in its anatomical structure, also resembles an eye.

Gradually, the visual sensation will be accompanied by a tactile sensation such as we feel when our attention is concentrated upon a physical organ.

The conscious perception of the Vishuda-Chakra (situated near the thyroid gland at the base of the larynx) is accomplished by practice of *Maha-Mudra*. For this we sit and bend the left leg so as to place the left foot against the right thigh. We then extend the right leg and, bending forward, seize the toes of the right foot with both hands. We close the eyes and concentrate our attention on the space between the eyes, as in the prceding exercise, but in pressing the chin against the chest. Since Vishuda-Chakra is located at the base of the larynx, it is in close connection with Ajna-Chakra. After a little while the same exercise is performed with the left leg.

After some practice, you will feel, in the region of the thyroid, a sensation like that of radiating light.

All Yoga exercises should be performed quite unemotionally, in a detached manner, without any desire to succeed or any apprehension of failing. All of the attention is to be concentrated exclusively on the exercise to be performed. Much of the success in Yoga training depends upon this condition of affective indifference to results. It will be evident to the student that results in the conscious control of the chakras cannot be expected from one day to the next and that the periods of practice must be regular and gradually more prolonged. The more time you give to the Mudras, the sooner you will get positive results. Regular daily practice periods of not less than half an hour are necessary.

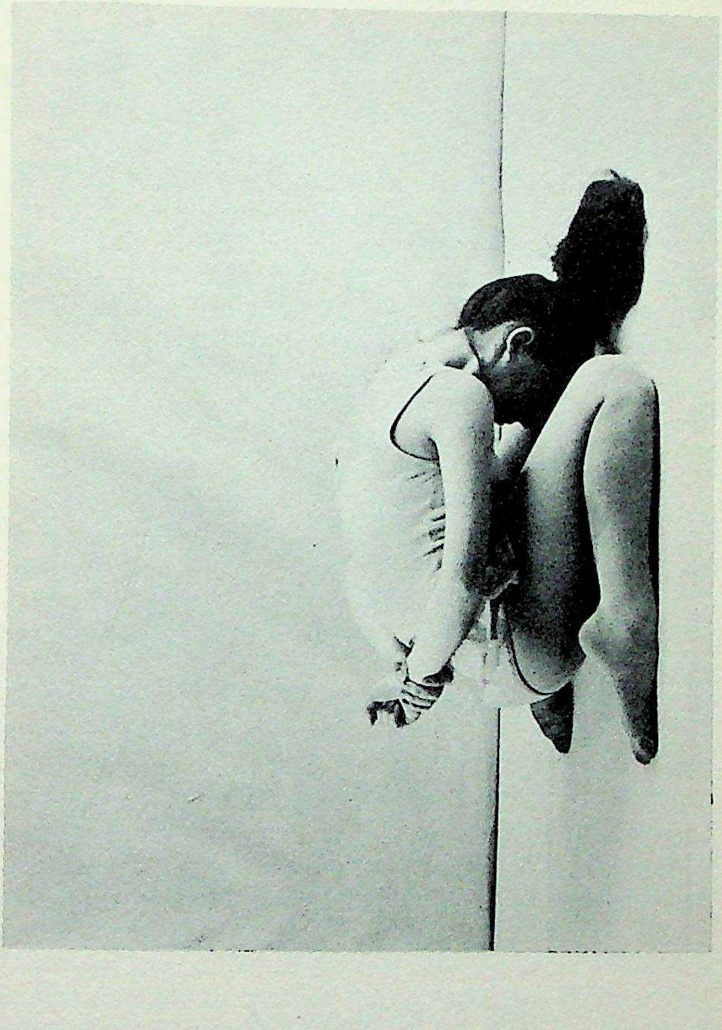
According to Yoga, organic life depends upon the three Chakras Anahata (near the heart), Manipura (solar plexus) and Svadishtana (above the sex organs). In this domain, *Manipura* has a directing function. Before we can dream of extending the mastery of the will to organic life, a conscious knowledge of Manipura and its functions is indispensable. This is achieved through the practice of *Agneyi-Mudra*. Again assume the sitting position of the Lotus or Sidhasana. With complete muscular relaxation, breathe rhythmically and concentrate attention upon a point situated a little above and behind the navel, eyes closed and in doubling attention at the moment of retaining the breath.

It may be mentioned, incidentally, that this Mudra is the basis of the training which enables the Tibetan Yogis to endure safely the lowest temperatures.

Conscious perception of the Muladara-Chakra (in the sacral plexus at the end of the spine) is obtained through practice of *Mula-Bandha*. To this end we assume the Lotus Seat or Sidhasana, in complete relaxation and breathe rhythmically. At the moment of exhaling we stop breathing for a moment and repeatedly contract the muscles of the lower basin as though to lift the organs of this part of the body. The attention is concentrated on a point about two inches above the perineum in the lower part of the pelvis. This exercise should be practised with an empty stomach.

Apart from rendering conscious the existence of the Muladara-Chakra, this Mudra strengthens the organs of the abdomen which have a natural tendency to move downwards. It relieves constipation. Indian Yogis call it the destroyer of decay and death and a promoter of youth.

These exercises called Mudras, are among the more difficult of Yoga exercises. Since results depend, to a great extent, upon correct execution, they should be performed, whenever possible, under the supervision of a teacher.



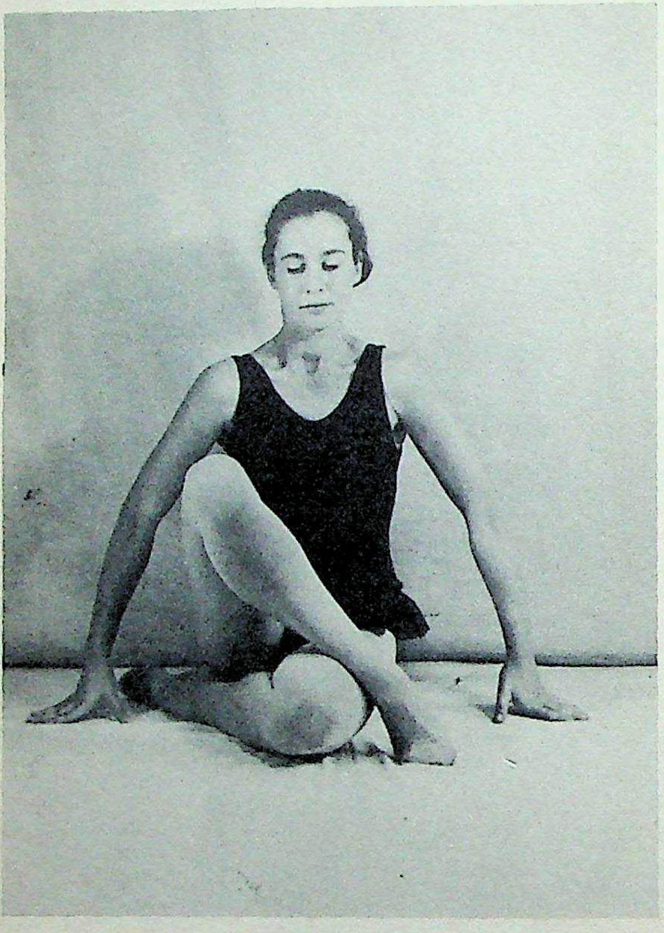


FIG. 5—VAKRASANA

Chapter 10

MASTERY OF PRANA

THE conscious apprehension and understanding of the three principal centres of pranic life, Ajna-Vishuda (between the eyes and near the thyroid), Manipura (solar plexus), and Muladara (at the base of the spine) form a sufficiently broad basis for an extension of direct action of the will upon the whole ethereal body by means of voluntary, conscious direction of Prana.

In the description of yogic breathing exercises (Pranayama), we shall strongly recommend that attention be concentrated upon the air or breath in inhaling, exhaling and retention. If we push the effort of mental concentration a little further, we shall begin to distinguish between two kinds of perception. One is a purely physical sensation of the air breathed in and the other a sensation which in itself is indescribable, but which will be recognized as soon as it is felt. It is a sensation of something that is not air, although it accompanies air and which is very sensitive to the action of the will, which air or breath is not. This something is Prana. You can, for instance, by an act of will, concentrate Prana in the region of the Ajna-Chakra (between the eyes), while the air takes its normal course through the lungs. A special and quite indescribable sensation accompanies this action which, at times, is connected with a visual sensation, that of a deep and luminous violet.

Once you have obtained the first results, you will find that it is also possible to transfer the accumulated Prana either to the region of Vishuda (near the thyroid, at the base of the neck) or to Anahata (in the region of the heart) or to any other Chakra.

When you have familiarized yourself with the disassociation of air and Prana, you may extend the field of your experiences, for instance in exhaling Prana through the fingers, the top of the head, the eyes, out of the organism.

The advantages of the mastery of Prana are not hard to understand. The voluntary direction of a charge of Prana to any part of the organism increases its voltage, so to speak, and thereby its vitality and consequently its power of self-regeneration. In an exceptionally well-trained person, this may be sufficient to prevent or to heal all sorts of illnesses, disharmonious conditions of the body. In less well-trained persons, the direction of Prana will become a powerful aid to other treatments.

Prana is probably a radiation of a certain wave-length. When once the length and frequency of this wave have been determined, and possibly even reproduced, then Prana will become the most modern therapeutic agent and one of the most powerful ones. Prana, moreover, is a conveyor of the will, which thereby is able to exercise direct action in matters which normally are not subject to it. Even organic reflexes like pain can be controlled in this manner. Experience has proven that violent pain, like that caused by neuralgia or colitis is susceptible to control through the action of the will as conveyed by Prana. It acts like an anaesthetic without its drawbacks. In the same manner, it is possible to exercise a curative influence upon an affected organ. The effect is the same as that of conscious auto-suggestion. It has been proven that perfect mastery of Prana-direction makes it possible to project the charge of Prana and will outside the limits of the ethereal body. The power of healing is, in this way, consciously acquired.

Modern medicine is more and more inclined to believe what the masters of Yoga have proclaimed many centuries ago,—that to treat merely symptoms of an illness is most often only exchanging one evil for another, one illness for another. It is taking the symptom for the cause, for instance, to ascribe the origin of a disease to bacillary invasion. The pranic disbalance which engenders unfavourable conditions for the vital processes, at the same time creates favourable ones for the invasion and development of foreign micro-organisms. The microbes are the beneficiaries of this state of affairs, but they are not its cause. As soon as the respective equilibrium is re-established, the conditions for the survival of these foreign bodies are lacking, and they disappear. This is the explanation of the bacillus-killing action of conscious and voluntary Prana-direction.

Chapter 11

ALL FLESH IS NOT MORTAL

WE have already spoken of the profound divergence existing between the current conception of life and the conception of Hatha-Yoga. Here is still another example. According to the current idea, life is something quite apart, an anomaly, so to speak, in the order of natural phenomena. Life appeared in the inanimate world, nobody knows when or how, and is transmitted in a non-conscious manner and always maintains an eminently precarious character. For Yoga, on the other hand, life is a natural phenomenon of a general kind; all is alive. The distinction between inanimate and animate, dead and living, for Yoga is merely a consequence of the fact that in so-called inanimate objects life is diffused, while in living beings it is individualized. One has nothing that the other does not have, but they have it in a different way. There is no abyss between the two.

Only in appearance is the phenomenon of life discontinuous and precarious. The transmission of fire is discontinuous, for each flame is a new flame, different from the one that lighted it; and fire is precarious because where there is no flame there is no fire. It is different with life which is always the same, one and permanent under its multiple aspects. Only its individual manifestations are precarious and discontinuous. In the most evolved living beings, life manifests itself in the form of an association between two different orders, the order of the species and the order of the individual. This association is precarious and discontinuous and when we speak of it we say: "Life is short".

In the realm of primitive living beings, to which the species of it belong, there are no separate individualities. We might say that it is a collective individuality, because it is always the same and unique element, the same cell which multiplies by division. In the class of more evolved beings, in which there is a personalized individuality, the species is represented by the egg, the permanent basis of successive vital phenomena. The individuals are born and die, but the life of the species, the egg, persists, always the same.

The primitive beings,which form the living tissue of the species and the innumerable classes of micro-organisms have no fixed vital cycle; organized as they are to live indefinitely, they never die by themselves but only through accident. When the conditions of their milieu become improper to the continuation of their existence, they disappear.

Everybody remembers the fundamental experience of Dr Carrel: a fragment of the human heart (a cellular aggregate) can live indefinitely as long as it is maintained in a milieu in which its essential vital exchanges remain assured. There is even the possibility that such cellular aggregates may be able to live a latent life in the absence of these conditions. According to two scientists, Lieske and Lipman, bacteria enclosed in sedimentary rock formations, the formation of which goes back millions of years, can be revived and have, therefore, always been latently alive.

But it is not necessary to go this far back to know that if our cycle of life is short, the primitive being with which we are associated, the species to which we owe not only our reproductive cells, but all cellular elements of our tissues can be considered as being immortal. If all accidents were avoided, if all the conditions necessary for the continuation of their vital processes were maintained, the cellular elements of our tissues would continue to exercise their organic functions immediately and indefinitely. Our body would be immortal.

If this is not the case, it is because the association, Species-Individual is separated from the universal source of life at the moment of birth and disposes only of an initial energy-charge just sufficient to maintain the conditions of organic existence for a very limited period of time.

In this association Species-Individual, the individual corresponds to what we call the "Me" or "I". The discussion of its nature and of the laws to which it is subject, apart from the association with the species, belongs to metaphysics and cannot be treated here. We are concerned here only with the association, because it alone is man and not one of the parts taken separately. And what we understand by "cycle of life", or duration of human life is the span of time which normally passes between the apparition of the association in this world, i.e. birth and its dissolution through death.

Chapter 12

CAN THE HUMAN LIFE-SPAN BE EXTENDED?

IF we stay within the natural order of things without making any excursions into the domain of the supernatural, the answer to this question would be evidently negative. Under favourable conditions, a missile of any sort may not reach the limit of the course which is conditioned by its initial impulsion; but even under the most favourable conditions, it can never go farther than that. The same law pertains to the human life-span.

In the realm of normal speculation, the question can be formulated in a different manner: "Can the duration of life be extended beyond the limits which today are considered as natural?" Looked at in this way, the answer may be different.

It is considered today that the medium duration of life, or the life-span is something like fifty-eight years for men and sixty-three years for women. This means that of one hundred thousand male children born in a given year, there will be fifty thousand survivors fifty-eight years later, and of one hundred thousand female children, there will be fifty thousand survivors sixty-three years later. The medium between masculine and feminine statistics is, therefore, sixty years, and this figure represents the medium duration of life for the two sexes. If some day there should be fifty thousand survivors at age seventy, the medium duration of life would have increased by ten years; at age eighty it would have increased by twenty etc. To transpose the problem on the individual plane, this would mean that a newborn baby which today has one chance in two to reach the age of sixty, would then have a chance in two to reach the age of seventy etc.

The value of these statistics is today falsified by a proportionally high infant mortality which leads to rather paradoxical results. Thus, an individual that at birth has a chance in two to attain age sixty, would have a chance in two to attain age sixty-seven if he reaches the age of thirty, and a chance in two to attain age seventy if he reaches age forty etc.

This goes to show that the normal duration of human life is much longer than the medium duration. The normal span is that of every human life if there were no accidents, illness being considered an accident. Medium duration is calculated after statistics which take into account the innumerable accidents, the interference of which in the immense majority of cases, prevents a human being from attaining his normal life-span. Therefore, even though of one hundred thousand new-borns, there are, on the average, only about twelve thousand survivors eighty years later, the limit of the human life-cycle must be fixed between eighty and ninety years under contemporary conditions of existence because it is only after age eighty that one really dies of old age.

Then there are also the accidents which shorten the span of useful activity of human beings. In comparison with all the animal species the period of decline in the human species is far too long.

Among the other mammals, the period of decline is equal to a tenth of the normal duration of life; it should be, therefore, from eight to ten years in the human species and the period of full activity should extend to at least age seventy. Without, therefore, straying in the least from the path of normal experience, we can say that what today is considered exceptional should be the norm, that the majority of our contemporaries should reach or even pass age eighty, after having led a life of useful activity until at least age seventy, provided that a rational mode of life, such as recommended by Hatha-Yoga were strictly adhered to.

There still remains another question to be answered. Is the life-span of eighty which we have considered as normal really the span of human life if we look at it from the point of view of the biological nature of the species? There is no doubt that looked at in this way, the human life-span is too short. In the species of mammals closest to us, the normal duration of life is from ten to twelve times that of the time needed to reach adult age. We are, biologically, so similar to these mammals, so manifestly constructed on the same plane that it is difficult to explain why we should make an exception from this rule while we conform to all the others.

With this in view, the normal cycle of existence of a human being would be between two hundred and two hundred fifty years. Man would lead an active existence until at least one hundred fifty years of age and would easily know his descendants down to the ninth generation before his decease. We would, therefore, have to admit that having adopted since time immemorial a kind of life not in conformity with his real nature, man had suffered a progressive diminution of vitality which has reduced the cycle of his existence to its actual limit.

Certain facts would seem to justify this view. There are, first of all, the reports of cases of extraordinary longevity which, we know, are not always to be relied upon. The learned Li Tschang Yun, a Chinaman who died in the province of Che-Chouan in 1936, pretended to have been born in 1690 which, of course, he could not prove. But everybody, even old men said that they had always known him. On his death, he left a widow sixty-four years of age, but she was his twenty-fourth wife. To be a widower twenty-three times in succession and to leave one of sixty-four years takes just the same a little time. Even if one puts in doubt the two hundred fifty-six years to which Li Tschang Yun laid claim, it must be admitted that he had reached an age far beyond the limits of normal "old age".

There is, on the other hand, a physiological phenomenon which, while rare, is not otherwise exceptional and which seems to justify the theory according to which the human life-cycle was originally much longer than nowadays. We refer to the third dentition. There are cases where a third growth of teeth occurs around the seventieth year of life. This happens generally to people who afterwards attain a ripe old age. These unexpected teeth are usually not very solid and do not last very long. The most probable explanation of this curious fact is that it represents something as normal as the second dentition of children at a time when the life-span of man was much longer than it is today.

The methods of prognosis used by Hindu Astrology which originated in prehistoric times, were established for a normal life-time of one hundred and twenty years. This leads us back to a very distant era, but in which humanity was already far enough advanced in civilization to make delicate astronomical observations and intricate calculations.

There is also a tradition which is no different from other religious traditions, that humanity was long ago endowed with a considerably longer life than today's humanity. According to this Indian tradition, the humanity of today, in regard to that of earliest times, has degenerated. As will be noted, this traditional view (which is also that of early Greek philosophy) is in contradiction to that generally held today. The evolutionary view is that our race, which was bestial and barbarous upon its appearance on earth, has gradually risen in the course of millions of years to its present lofty state. The Hindu tradition on the contrary holds that humanity which we call "primitive" was not that of our first ancestors, but rather a humanity that has reached the last degree of degeneration, from which it gradually rose again.

One of the principal aims of Hatha-Yoga is the reconstruction of that for us half-divine humanity of the beginning.

Chapter 13

THE TECHNIQUE OF LONG LIFE

IN ancient texts on Yoga, the description of certain exercises is often followed by comments such as: "He who practises regularly shall not fear death and old age", or "The hair of those who practise this exercise shall not turn white and their bodies will conserve perpetual youth," etc.

If you should consider such preoccupations as all too materialistic, you should also remember that Hatha-Yoga ignores the distinction between body and mind, in virtue of which occidental civilization has held for so long that contempt of the body which was one of the conditions for the elevation of the mind. Although physical health is not necessarily always a condition of spiritual development, it can nevertheless not be denied that it will, at least, facilitate such development. And if we disposed of a longer period of time in which to follow the path which leads to spirituality, we would go farther. There can be no doubt that if the benefactors of humanity, the scientists, whose inventions or discoveries have been the stepping-stones of progress, had had at their disposal a few more decades for their researches, that science would be several centuries ahead of what it is now.

As we have previously observed, the conscientious practice of Hatha-Yoga has, as a normal result, the prolongation of youth and extension of the life-span. In order to obtain these benefits, it is, however, indispensable to respect three essential conditions, two of which are of a physiological and the third of a moral nature. In order to fulfil the physiological conditions, we must liberate ourselves of two parasitisms—the digestive parasitism and the sexual parasitism.

The slogan: "We should eat to live and not live to eat" has been repeated so often that it has become somewhat threadbare, although it is as true as ever. Machines which generate energy should utilize only a small proportion of the energy produced if they are to function well. If that proportion is unduly increased, the productivity of the machine decreases and at a certain moment works at a loss. The more energy the digestive apparatus absorbs for its own use, the less there remains for the vital needs of the whole organism and the more rapidly the organism uses up its initial energy-charge upon which depends the life-span. It is therefore of utmost importance to follow a moderate diet.

Even more redoubtable is the sexual parasitism. According to the secret tradition of Hatha-Yoga, the degeneration of the human species is mainly due to a perversion of the sexual instinct. The half divine race of the Great Ancestors is said to have sexually united with inferior, monkey-like races. The result of this commerce was the degenerated human race of today. No animal species, with the exception precisely of the monkeys, shows us the example of the unbridled repetition of the sexual act such as is the rule in our present humanity.

The sexual act involves an expenditure of vital force which does not come out of our income, so to speak, of energy produced by the process of metabolism, but which is derived from the *initial capital*. Every repetition of the sexual act means a corresponding shortening of the remaining life-span.

If man were originally constituted to accomplish a certain number of X acts in Y years, the multiplication of sexual frequency would logically mean a corresponding reduction of the number of years of life. If in conformity with tradition we assume that the sexual activity of man was originally limited to two annual periods of one month each, one at the end of spring and the other at the end of autumn, it can be easily understood that independently from any other cause, the extension of sexual activity to twelve months in a year must have had as a consequence a reduction of the life-span to one-sixth of what it was originally.

Although the human organism has adapted itself through the centuries to a sexual frequency contrary to its real nature, *the voluntary control of sexual activity is considered by Hatha-Yoga as one of the most important, if not the most important means of prolonging youth and life itself.* What could one not accomplish in this world when one has learned to control sexuality! Every man, if not every woman knows that.

As regards the moral condition, it is so important, that were it not fulfilled, the practice of Yoga to achieve long life and maintain youth would be in vain.

Hatha-Yoga distinguishes between good and bad sentiments. Good sentiments are *positive* and expansive and determine in the organism the production of tonic and vitalizing hormones. Bad sentiments are those which are restrictive and *negative* and they determine the production of depressing and devitalizing toxic substances. This is by no means to be taken in a figurative but in a strictly literal sense.

Nature shows a strange unity of plan in all its creations. When it provides a creature with an organ or function useful in a particular case, she provides a great many other creatures with the same organ or function for which they are not only useless, but harmful. When certain animals are in danger, they secrete a hormone which immobilizes them in a sort of catalepsy, which gives them the aspect of a corpse and thus deceives the enemy. In other animals, however, the same hormone paralyzes their means of defence and they become an easy prey. Skunks and some other animals have the faculty of secreting a smelling substance which puts their enemies to flight.

A certain number of creatures, insects, serpents etc. possess a particularly redoubtable weapon of defence and attack: poison. Thus the cobra, with man the only animal, it is said, kills without need or reason, for the pleasure of doing evil. But the cobra and the other poisonous animals dispose of natural instruments with which to inoculate their enemies with the poison. The others, including man, not possessing the same advantage, reabsorb the poison they distil under the influence of fear, anger, envy, jealousy and other negative feelings, and poison *themselves*.

These for the most part little known venoms and toxic hormones are very active even in minute quantities, and since they have no normal outlet, they accumulate within the organism. It would therefore be useless to expect prolongation of youth, health and life even with the most constant and conscientious practice of Yoga if simultaneously one poisons oneself every day a little more by these toxins which undermine vitality.

One cannot be a real Yogi with all the benefits this includes, as long as one has not liberated oneself of devitalizing negative feelings, thoughts and ideas. We must free ourselves of fear and its chronic form, anxiety and worry, of morbid apprehension, especially the apprehension of death. Above all, we must liberate ourselves of all hostile feelings and emotions, anger in its chronic form, hatred, jealousy and envy.

Every time we more or less consciously wish evil for our fellow-man, our organism, just like that of the cobra, secretes a poison which, according to nature's plan, is meant for our enemy. In fact, however, it is we who absorb it and who are its victims.

This is not a lesson in morals, but a simple statement of fact, by which everyone may profit for his own good.

Chapter 14

HOW TO RELAX

JOSEPH Kennedy, best-selling author of *Relax and Live*, who has taught his methods of relaxation to hundreds of pilots at the Pre-flight school at Athens, Georgia, very pertinently points out that nowadays most of us, in practically all our everyday activities are driving with brakes on. The brake he has in mind is unconscious tension. The worst of it is that we are not even aware that the brakes are on nor that the fatigue from clenched jaw and other constricted muscles result in severe loss of energy. Tension is really waste effort, an investment of energy into tasks that should be done automatically. For example, the speaker who tries too hard to speak correctly and starts to stutter, finally becomes tongue-tied. Or the violinist, who hundreds of times has played a difficult passage without even thinking of it, fails during a concert because he tries too hard. Intense competition in every field of endeavour and the resulting anxiety and fear of failure mean that most of us invest too much energy, too great an effort into the task at hand, that we try too hard. We do not rely enough on our automatic reflexes and on the vast storehouse of experience in our unconscious mind that can only come to the surface if we do not interfere with its mechanism. Now the tension, itself, can become an unconscious habit. And that is finally what makes it so hard to relax.

The first thing to do then, is to locate the tension in your muscles. In order to do so, we must first create more tension, then let go. In going over every group of muscles in the body, layer after layer, we learn to discover tension where we never suspected it, in the forehead, the neck, the abdomen. Remember, in order really to relax, we must first produce *more* tension, *conscious* tension. Do not make another useless effort in trying to relax. Do this systematically, tense a particular muscle and then stop. It will relax by itself.

The interesting thing is that the interrelation between mind and body is nowhere as evident as in this field. A tense muscle denotes anxiety. Tension *creates* anxiety; relaxation *dissipates* anxiety. This is literally true. It is as though the mind or brain received a message from the nerves of the tense muscles, stating that there must be something wrong, that a special effort was needed. There may have been real anxiety at the source of the muscular tension, but as tension becomes a habit, so does the anxiety, one that is purely artificial. As we relax, on the other hand, the mind assumes that everything is all right and imparts to the whole organism a feeling of confident security and well-being.

This is particularly true with tension of the forehead, the neck, the eyes, the jaw and the hands. Learn to relax them systematically, in consciously tensing them, then letting go. When the hands are kept tense, the whole body is geared for action. Learning to relax your hands when you are under pressure will give you a feeling of relief and mastery. The habit of tension is a habit of defence. In moments of physical danger, our muscles tense automatically and if we habitually live on the defensive, the unconscious mind keeps the muscles tensed.

It is a fact that *it is far easier to relieve one's anxieties physically* through relaxation of our muscles than to do so mentally. Or rather, the two should go together. Mental control alone, without muscular relaxation cannot possibly produce satisfactory results. Body and mind are one. A systematic relaxation of the muscles through regular relaxation exercises once or twice a day, on awakening and on retiring, will pay you dividends in a feeling of well-being and peace.

The correct technique of relaxation is one of the great accomplishments of Hatha-Yoga, for the benefits of which alone, western civilization, so desperately in need of relaxation, owes a debt of gratitude to the east. This technique is bound up with the entire system of Hatha-Yoga and has to do particularly with correct breathing and the conscious

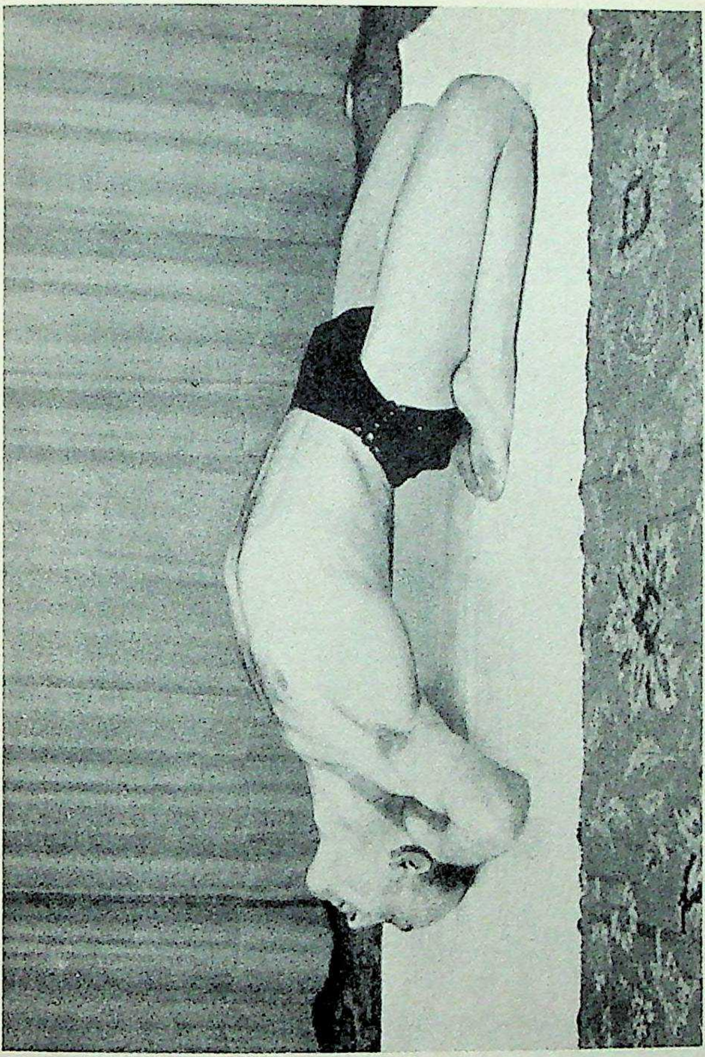


FIG. 6—MATSYASANA—FISH POSTURE

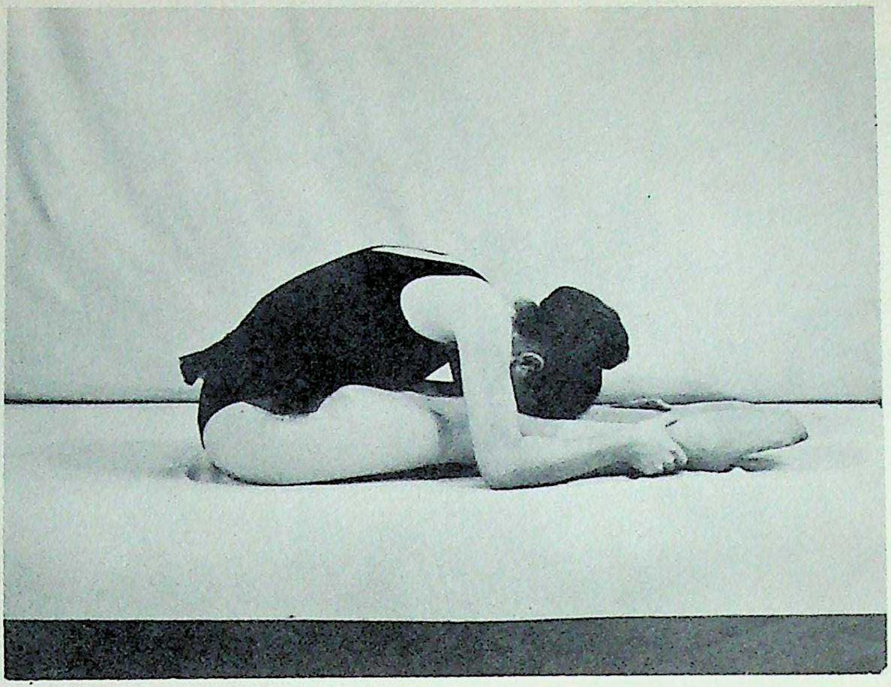


FIG. 7—PASHIMOTTANA

control of breath, of which we deal at length in the chapter devoted to that subject. We would only mention here again that much of the tension, the nervousness and anxiety existing in the western world is due to the fact that hardly anybody knows how to breathe correctly, nor is even aware of the importance of correct breathing. It is falsely assumed that we all know how to breathe without ever having learned how. Those of us who have studied Pranayama and have learned how to breathe, will hardly need any further instruction in the technique of relaxation. It is impossible to feel tense when you know how to breathe.

The causes of tension and anxiety in modern society are bound up with the whole pattern of modern civilization. As long as the pattern is not changed, the tensions created by it will automatically reflect themselves in the behaviour of men living under the stress and strain of that civilization. For the civilization that created the great Yoga system, this tension did not exist. As long as conditions are what they are, all we can do is to alleviate the effects of the tension produced by the basic causes. One of the most nefarious of these is the insane striving for so-called success, in trying so hard to win.

In more recent times, the notion of tension, stress and strain has finally also been added to the vocabulary of modern medicine. The age of anxiety has been upon us too long for it not to take its toll in all sorts of diseases, including mental breakdown. The poet W. H. Auden sings:

> "*Sob, heavy world*
> *Sob as you spin,*
> *Mantled in mist, remote from the happy* ..."

The notion of stress is, first of all, a notion of physics and has been defined as far back as the seventeenth century by the British physicist Robert Hooke, who stated that "Stress set up within an elastic body is proportionate to the strain to which the body is subjected by an applied load." In the human "elastic" body, serious illness can be the consequence of too much stress and strain, emotional pressure, shock, physical fatigue, bad eating habits etc. These stress diseases are said to be a fast growing modern problem. They are recognized as strictly a problem of the civilized races. What are some of the symptoms? A child may get stomach cramps before a school examination. A housewife, reports *Time*, developed rheumatoid arthritis worrying over her relationship with her husband. A soldier cracks under the strain of waiting for battle. But these are by no means the only mentally inducted stress diseases, or psycho-somatic illnesses, as they are also called. A partial list of such diseases includes stuttering, heart diseases, skin diseases, asthma, duodenal ulcers, hypertension, even diabetes. It seems that there is a saying in Wall Street: "When stocks go down, sugar (in the urine) goes up."

Medicine has defined the cause of these stress diseases in the following manner: "Stress diseases are caused when the combat mechanism of the body goes into action under some shock, the thyroid demanding a 'purposeless increase' in metabolic output, the pituitary sending ACTH flooding to the adrenals and the blood-pressure, blood salt and blood sugar increasing. Of course, there is also muscular tension. Once stimulated by the shock, the mechanism keeps on going. The human system is exhilarated, but badly unbalanced. Exhaustion usually follows, often with a dangerous lowering of the body's normal resistance to infection." (From *The Practitioner*, Jan. 1954).

On the mental plane, stress and strain easily take the form of anxiety and physicians agree this is the most dangerous form it can take. Medicine may be all too inclined to content itself with the exact description of the disease and to treat the specific illness, the affected organ. But nowhere as in these tension diseases is it as clearly apparent that they are only symptoms of an overall disease affecting man as an entity, or what might even be considered a collective disease of modern civilization. It is a hopeful sign that it is being recognized that spiritual culture, religion, the Church should make up for the deficiencies of modern life which cause stress and anxiety. A British clergyman has pointed out that within the family life of the Christian Church, many men and women have been freed from the fetters of anxiety and self-absorption. And a British surgeon, concerned perhaps with the slightly sectarian nature of the remedy, has suggested that leisure might be the answer. Is it? All depends, of course, upon the nature of this leisure. Such as it is used by most people, it amounts merely to a new source of stress and strain.

The answer may lie in a synthesis of the two remedies suggested. Long ago Yoga has pointed out that only a sound body can be an obedient instrument of the revelations of the mind. In the field of relaxation as in others, the physical exercises of Hatha-Yoga are not meant to be a purpose in themselves, but merely a training, a conditioning of the body instrument for the higher purpose, the liberation of the mind.

In this sense then, the Yoga technique of relaxation deserves a more detailed consideration. There is no doubt that the method described by J. Kennedy is based on the age-old method of Hatha-Yoga which is fundamentally the alternation of concentration and relaxation. In this art Hatha-Yoga is inspired by the natural habits of certain animals like the cat, the relaxation habits of which have been studied closely. The famous Asana or posture called Savasana is the human adaptation of the secret of animal relaxation.

Savasana: The Sanskrit term Savasana means dead body. Asana means posture and, therefore, Savasana "dead-body-posture" which, of course, is one of complete repose, complete relaxation. In this posture we lie flat on our back, preferably on the floor, on a mat or rug, naked or as lightly clad as possible, arms stretched out alongside the body, feet stretched out and close together. We breathe easily, without forcing, slowing down the breathing movements as much as possible—we rest. We thereupon consciously tense all the muscles, group after group, one after the other, beginning with the feet. Immediately after tensing the muscles we let go and relax them. This tension and relaxation must be done consciously, in concentrating all our attention upon the particular muscle thus treated, the muscles of the feet, legs, knees, abdomen, arms, hands, shoulders, neck, jaw, face and forehead. We go over the whole body in this way once, twice, three times, until all the muscles are fully relaxed. We think of nothing except deep rest and repose and peace which insures perfect health.

The effect of this exercise is immediate and surprising. Not only the muscles, but also the whole nervous system are at rest. It should, incidentally, be noted that for the development of the muscular system, relaxation of the muscles is as important as their exercise. Blood circulation is now perfectly equalized, blood distribution regular. The circulation in the veins becomes easier, the heart feels unburdened since its work has been made much easier. It is said that ten minutes of rest in this posture, breathing slowed down, the mind filled with the thought of rest and peace is worth a whole night's sleep. This kind of relaxation also cleans the blood of harmful toxic substances.

Savasana (Fig. 3) should be performed regularly every day on arising and on retiring. Even during the day we can easily find a few minutes to relax in this way. The secret of the vitality of many a busy executive lies in his faculty to "let go" completely, not only physically, but also mentally, several times a day.

Surprising as it may sound, the correct execution of Savasana is not as easy as it may seem. Relaxation does not come easy to western man. As a result of the "tempo" of our life, contraction of nerves and muscles often become an unconscious habit. There is a knack to relaxation. Once you have acquired it, once you have experienced the delicious feeling of rest and peace it brings, you will never want to miss it any more. Relaxation will become one of your dearest "good habits".

It is excellent practice in finishing this exercise, before you get up, to consciously contract all your muscles in reverse order, from head to foot and finally to stretch yourself, arms, legs, once, twice, slowly, voluptuously. You will feel marvellously revivified!

Chapter 15

PRANAYAMA—THE ART OF BREATHING

"A MORE useful science than the science of respiration, a more beneficial science than the science of respiration, a greater friend than the science of respiration has never been seen nor heard." So says Indian wisdom through the mouth of Shivagama. And Mazda, supreme God of the Zoroastrian religion twenty-five hundred years or more ago has said: "Breath is Life." And this is true in both a narrower and a larger sense. Of this life we are all invited to partake, but only a few take full advantage of the invitation. A famous Yogi visiting western countries for the first time was astonished to find that few people knew how to breathe well.

Without breath there is no life. From the lowest degree of organic life up to the highest form of its manifestation, man, breathing is an indispensable requirement. The newborn baby takes one deep breath and therewith begins an uninterrupted series of breaths, until, with the last one, he renders his soul to his creator.

A man can live for weeks without solid food, for days without water or other fluid, but only a few minutes without air. The connection between life and breath is extremely close and breathing is the most important biological function of the body. All other activities of the human organism are closely connected with breathing, which exercises a decisive effect on our state of health, our mental condition and even on our life-span. According to Indian philosophy, every man for each incarnation is given a certain number of breaths. He who breathes hastily, rapidly, will soon exhaust the supply of breath which he was provided with at birth and die long before the one who lives peacefully and breathes slowly.

Civilized man has forgotten how to breathe well. One of the consequences of the unnatural life of man is that he has forgotten the age-old rhythm of sound breathing. Anxiety has taken him by the throat so that he hardly *dares* breathe deeply any more. An Indian Yogi said that the way a child of the twentieth century breathes is barely sufficient to vegetate, just sufficient for the child to stay alive. This is so because we do not understand any more the truth that only conscious control of breathing will give us the resistance which insures a long and healthful life.

Primitive man, living under natural conditions, did not have to learn how to breathe. Continued movement, fresh air, the stimulation of the chase, the fight with the elements, all prepared him instinctively to be a good breather. In this he had the help of the third lung, the skin. Every irritation of the skin, cold, heat, mechanical influences, all affect the rhythm of lung breathing.

We must make here a little excursion into the realm of applied biology and recall to mind a few facts, all of which you probably know, or may have known. A short recapitulation of the process of breathing is necessary in order to understand the importance of correct breathing. Breathing has a double goal: through inhalation it provides the blood circulation with a regular supply of oxygen; at the same time it eliminates, through exhalation, a residue of combustion called carbonic acid. Oxygen is introduced into the body through the nasal channels, pharynx, larynx and the bronchials, all of which contribute to its preparation for absorption by the organism. The nostrils filter the air of dust particles. The mucuous membrane of the nose secretes a liquid called mucus which exercises a bactericidal action, one of the reasons for the importance of nose breathing. The filtered and tempered air is carried directly to the lungs by the bronchial tubes. These tubes divide into a great many cells around which radiate a system of capillary blood vessels which absorb the fresh oxygen and eliminate the carbonic acid. The freshly oxygenized blood goes from the lungs to the heart, from where it is sent to all parts of the body, to return finally to the lungs charged with carbonic acid ready to be eliminated. A continuous circulatory movement is thus established.

It is self-evident that the thoroughness of the exchange of oxygen and carbonic acid, of absorption and elimination conditions the circulation of the blood. In the so-called normal respiration, the cells of the lungs do not work sufficiently to insure a complete change. This is true particularly regarding the expulsion and elimination of carbonic acid, especially with advanced age when lungs and thorax lose some of their original elasticity. For this reason alone, not to speak of the influence of respiration upon the heart and upon metabolism in general, correct breathing is vitally important.

There is nothing new or original in these considerations. Western scientists, physicians and educators more and more recognize their value. And as a rule, they counter with the remark that the practice of some sport will go a long way towards the elimination of the breathing deficiencies of the average western man and woman.

Now there is no doubt that the correct and regular practice of some sport such as golf, tennis, baseball, hockey, basketball and especially swimming is of great help in the acquisition of a correct breathing technique. It is particularly encouraging that a majority of young people in most countries have the opportunity of practising one or several of these sports regularly in and out of school. But even to them the following remarks will be of great help. As for the grand old army of men and women who have left school and college to work in office, laboratory or factory and who play an occasional game of golf or tennis on a week-end and during their annual vacation, they can be invaluable. It is during the years when the care of our health, the elasticity of our muscles should be our greatest concern that most of us are more or less the slaves of our occupation. But, however little time we may have to devote to physical exercise, we still must breathe if we want to live and so we might just as well breathe well; it does not take more time and the benefit will be great.

It has been calculated that man in repose breathes about fifteen times a minute. With each breath he exchanges about a pint of air. With stronger respiration he exchanges approximately three pints of reserve air and if he increases his respiration still more he adds another three pints to this exchange of air. The lungs of an adult have, therefore, a possible content of about three and one-half quarts of air. Normally, therefore, we exchange only a fraction of the possible air content of our lungs. During a leisurely walk, the amount of air exchanged is increased to two and a half times the lung-content, in mountain climbing to ten times, in swimming to twenty times.

Thousands of years ago, wise men in the east have recognized the astonishing results achieved in the maintenance and restoration of health through proper regulation of breathing. Certain postures connected with breathing exercises were elevated to the rank of religious ceremonies in order to insure regular practice. Before we examine the Yoga breathing method, we must consider another reason why Yoga attaches so great an importance to this function and this leads us to a consideration of the composition of air.

One of the few chemical formulas that the average high school student has not forgotten two years after graduation is that of water, H_2O and possibly that of air: "The gaseous fluid which we breathe and which envelops the earth ... Air is inodorous, invisible, insipid, colourless, elastic, posessed of gravity, easily moved, rarefied and condensed. It is composed of mechanically mixed oxygen and nitrogen in the relative volume of twenty-one to seventy-nine or twenty-three to seventy-seven by weight. It contains also small percentages of carbon dioxide, aqueous vapor, nitric acid, ozone and organic matter ..." according to Webster. According to Indian tradition, air contains yet another substance that can neither be weighed nor measured. It is, nevertheless, no mere theoretical assumption or fragment of mystic lore and you need not accept the existence of this mysterious substance in the air as you would a dogma, on mere faith. After all, even purely materialistic science accepts the existence of certain natural forces, the presence of which can only be proven through their demonstrable effects. Electricity is one of them, certain enzymes are others, not to speak of viruses and other micro-organisms science knows exist, because of their mostly destructive effects.

For eastern wisdom, every force, every energy that makes itself felt in the universe has an inner kernel, a nucleus, a first cause producing all life, all movement, all action. This absolute potential force, of which we have already spoken in another connection is called PRANA. Mystically speaking, Prana, before the beginning of creation, was in the Absolute as the spirit or idea behind all the forces. We think in this connection of the first lines of the Gospel according to St John: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God ... all things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made."

Indian philosophy looks upon Prana as a Christian would upon the Word, Logos, the beginning of all things, the absolute idea, the causative force or, as Vivekananda expresses it: "A manifestation of the universal power, indefinite and omnipresent."

The beginning of creation means that Prana becomes active and that all forces emanate from it. In the same way all matter emanates from a primary matter,—if it may be permitted to use this paradoxical turn of phrase,—which in its latent condition is the idea or spirit of matter. In oriental philosophy, this is known as Akasha. With the beginning of creation, Prana starts to act on Akasha to form it, thus originating the manifold variations of force and matter. In all forms of life, Prana is present as a vital force. All energy is based on Prana: weight, gravity, electricity, radioactivity, and without Prana there is no life, since Prana is the soul of all life and energy. This primary principle is found everywhere; it is in air without being air; it is in food without being a food; it is in water but is not identical with the chemical elements of water, which are only the carriers of Prana.

The air is filled with free Prana and we can assimilate it through respiration. It is "respiration plus X", something more vital than the air itself. Since Prana is a non-physical force, we must learn to *feel* it penetrating our being. Prana nourishes mind and body.

Prana is probably the source of electricity and other radiations. Electricity is not created by a dynamo, as some people naively think.

Western science has partly confirmed the existence of a non-chemical component in the air. There are the experiences of Dr Curry, who has discovered in air an isotope of ozone which he calls "Arane" and which seemed to him to be indispensable to the maintenance of life. It may be asserted, in any event, that the hypothesis of the existence of Prana in air is not essentially in opposition to western scientific tenets. Science held that the universe is filled with "ether". Exactly what the composition of this hypothetical substance is has thus far not been defined. Then there are the cosmic rays which are supposed to flood the earth and which are said to be of decisive importance for the maintenance of life on our planet.

Indian thought holds that wherever there is life or movement in the universe, there is also Prana and that without Prana, all would be dead matter, that Prana is the mother of all spiritual, physical and chemical force, the innermost meaning of the so-called natural forces and their form of manifestation. And Yoga believes that between Prana and the mind there exists a mysterious relationship, that animal organisms are only the form in which mental force manifests itself, (note the similarity of this conception with Christian Science belief) the mechanism of the mind. In order to manifest itself on the material plane, the mind develops the appropriate organs with the aid of Prana. It is, therefore, the life-radiation which fills the universe.

All this goes to explain why Yoga lays such stress on breathing, i.e. correct breathing. Since air is filled with Prana and since the human organism can absorb Prana by the process of respiration, it is evident that we should profit to the utmost by this beneficial force.

Through normal, ordinary breathing, we absorb a certain amount of Prana, but through Yoga-breathing we lay up a considerable amount of reserve Prana in our brain and in our nervous centres, to be used in case of need. When we are called upon to furnish an unexpected mental or physical effort, we draw upon this reserve. People who possess the faculty of storing Prana are said to have great vitality.

More important still is: Should we be able to *direct* the flow of Prana, which enlivens our material body, and subject it to our will, we shall be in harmony with the universal stream of Prana. Thought is the agent which directs this stream. Thought, mind, is the key to the door of life. As false thought can make us ill, so can *right* thought make us well again.

The most evident manifestation of Prana in the human body is that it forces us to breathe. In order to collect more Prana in our nerve centres, we must, first of all, learn to discipline the movements of our lungs, our respiration. This means that each breath should be taken consciously and that the Prana absorbed should be conducted into the storehouse of the nerve-centres through concentration upon these centres. The conscious practice of controlled breathing and concentration of thought is called *Pranayama*. This is the most important part and basis of the whole system of Hatha-Yoga.

To breathe through the nose is an elementary rule of correct breathing and should scarcely need any further comment. Mouth-breathing, however, is such a frequent bad habit, while sleeping or awake, in children and adults that we may be excused in insisting upon this point. The door to the air-conduits is the nose. It has been provided by nature with all sorts of protective devices so that neither cold air nor dirt can deeply penetrate. Inside the nose are the guardians of the inner door, the glands which finish off any bacteria that have succeeded in getting this far. The smelling organism, this admirable instrument warns immediately of fermentations and poisonous gases that could endanger health. But the most important task of this organ is the absorption of Prana from the air. Everybody has experienced the exhilaration and feeling of increased energy which accompanies the inhalation of a deep breath of fresh air when the air is inhaled through the nose. The same quantity of air inhaled through the mouth loses the refreshing and invigorating quality which is due to Prana absorbed through the nose. The mouth lacks an instrument for the absorption of Prana. The habitual mouth-breather will automatically suffer from a lack of Prana with a corresponding decrease in the power of resistance against infection, quite apart from the fact that he loses the bacteria-filtering protection of the mucous membranes of the nose.

THE COMPLETE YOGA BREATH

Basis and point of departure of the breath regulation exercises is the Complete Breath, consisting of the composition and co-ordination of three methods of breathing, high breath, medium breath and abdominal breath. In order to understand complete breathing we must first acquaint ourselves with its component parts.

High breath: The high breath is the habitual breathing method of most women. In this method which lifts shoulders, collar-bone and ribs, only the upper part of the lungs is being used. Since this is the smallest part, only very little air reaches the lungs. It is the method which wastes the most energy for the least result. Most illnesses of the respiratory organs are due to faulty breathing, with high breathing as a contributory factor.

The reason why so many women use this method is not due to any anatomical difference between the thorax of women and men, but to the obstructions produced by the wearing of corsets, girdles etc., together with the unnatural manner of living of many women who spend most of their time in a sitting position, be it at home or at the office. In this position, bent over a work table, a typewriter or at a hand of bridge, any other breathing method is a practical impossibility. But not only women, many professional and business men also use this faulty breathing method.

Medium or Intercostal breath: The second component of the complete breath is medium or intercostal breathing. This is somewhat better than high breathing, but is still far from satisfactory. Only the middle part of the lungs here is filled with air. This is the way most men breathe, standing or sitting. This sort of shallow, superficial breathing is done quite unconsciously, only occasionally interrupted by a deep breath more like a yawn which resembles a desperate reflex of air-thirsty lungs.

Abdominal (*diaphragm*) *breath*: This is a method used by many men and the one recommended by most American health specialists. It is no doubt better than the other two methods mentioned, because it fills both the lower and middle parts of the lungs with air.

From what we have said, we inevitably arrive at the conclusion that the most perfect method of breathing would be one which combines all three methods in one perfect, complete breathing technique. The entire breathing apparatus, every cell of the lungs and all the muscles participating in the breathing process would thus be brought into action. The thorax would then expand to its full breadth, the diaphragm would function regularly, softly massaging the internal organs of the abdomen.

The Complete Yoga Breath is the simplest variation and the indispensable basis of the Yoga art of breathing. This fundamental Pranayama-exercise is performed as follows: We stand straight, legs slightly apart. We exhale completely. We then inhale through the nose beginning with the abdominal breath, activating the diaphragm, pushing the abdomen outward, without consciously taking a breath. The pushing-out movement will, by itself, fill the lower part of the lungs with air. If we are not sure of ourselves, we can lay the palms of our hands upon the abdomen, in order to control the movement. Men will find this easy since every healthy man is a natural belly breather. Women might find it a little more difficult at the beginning, especially those who do not practise some physical exercise or sport, but a little patience will soon bring the desired result.

In the second phase of the complete breath we expand the lower ribs and the middle part of the thorax, gradually taking over the air from the lower part of the lungs.

The third stage of inhalation is the complete expansion of the thorax. We take in as much air as we can find room for in our expanded lungs. In this last phase, the abdomen is drawn in so that it can serve as a support for the lungs.

It would seem at first glance that the complete Yoga-breath consists of three separate and distinct movements, but in practice the three movements glide one into the other in a rhythmically flowing wave. A little practice, directing our attention to each of the three phases will soon give us the knack of this smooth, wave-like, non-jerky movement.

With inhalation completed, we begin to exhale slowly through the nose so that the air leaves the lungs in the same succession we have followed on the intake. We, therefore, first draw in the abdomen, then contract the ribs and finally relax the collar-bone and shoulders without forcing, but so as to retain as little air as possible. Immediately afterwards we inhale again.

The simplest form of Pranayama, the complete breath, should be practised for a few minutes before the three principal meals. We begin with a minute's practice on the first day and a minute more every day up to the fifth day. Only then should we begin to practise other variations of Yoga breathing. The effects of the complete breath, such as they have been determined at the Yoga Research Institute at Lonawala, India are manifold and entirely beneficial. Daily practice of this simple form of Pranayama is said to make one immune against tuberculosis and other affections of the lungs. One who practises Pranayama regularly will never suffer from a catarrh and from colds because good solid lung tissue, fortified by correct breathing resists bacterial invasion. Pranayama broadens the chest and permits the lungs to develop properly. Narrow-chested people should immediately start to practise Pranayama consciously and gradually, in order to overcome an acquired or hereditary tendency to illness of the lungs. Grippe and colds can be nipped in the bud by frequent short periods of Pranayama far more efficiently than by the proverbial hot toddy.

Yoga is of the opinion that the quality of the blood depends to a great extent on the quantity of oxygen and Prana absorbed by the lungs. Faulty breathing, therefore, has a direct influence upon the quality of the blood which, in turn, affects all the organs of the body. Especially the stomach and the digestive organs are affected by insufficient, faulty breathing, because the digestive process uses oxygen for its proper functioning. Correct breathing prevents these ills; incorrect breathing affects not only the lungs and the stomach but also the nervous system and the brain.

The diaphragm which, as we have seen, plays an important role in correct breathing, thereby becomes strengthened and assumes proper functioning. It exercises a mild pressure upon the liver, stomach and digestive tract which acts like a mild massage, promoting the natural functions of these organs. It is evident that the mere exercising of the surface muscles, as is done by the western systems of physical culture, is not enough. The inner organs need to be exercised as well and this is done in a most natural manner by correct breathing.

It is true that the practice of all kinds of sports promotes the functioning of the lungs. But this increased activity is unsystematic, jerky and spasmodic. Moreover, the greater quantity of oxygen thus obtained by the lungs is immediately consumed in consequence of the perpetual loss of energy. Yoga breathing is rhythmical and is accompanied by a far smaller loss of energy. Western sport, western physical exercises are active and dynamic. Yoga exercises are passive. Western exercises are trying since they are connected with a loss of energy, while through Yoga exercises we not only conserve, but store new energy, create reserves of force. This is the reason why Yoga exercises never tire, but on the contrary, refresh and tonify.

Many of the beneficial effects of regulated breathing are due to this economy of oxygen and Prana, to the creation of reserve-prana in the organism. Sometimes inhalation is followed by a short pause, a stoppage which increases the storage of prana in the nerve centres. Some other breathing exercises are intended to regulate the positive and negative currents of the body. Breathing itself is an alternation between a positive and a negative state. Exhalation is the positive state during which the energy absorbed is distributed in all parts of the body; with inhalation we are in the negative, receptive state. If we are able to regulate consciously the uniformity of our breathing, we establish a balance between the positive and negative currents. The principal variations of the Complete Breath are all based, as we shall see, on this principle of the stabilization of the positive and negative body currents. The regular practice of Pranayama is a powerful aid to health, the simplest and certainly by far the least expensive cure of any number of ills, so simple that, alas, it is practically ignored.

"Breath is Life, and if you know how to breathe you shall live long on this earth."

OTHER BREATHING EXERCISES

As we have mentioned, all the Yoga breathing exercises are really only variations of the Complete Breath. It should also be noted that while we describe these variations here separately, they are usually practised in connection with other Yoga exercises, the Asanas or Postures. We must, therefore, always remember that while the breathing exercises are valuable when practised alone, they are even more beneficial when practised in connection with the rest of the Yoga exercises. These form a whole consisting of three elements:

(a) Direction of Consciousness
(b) Regulation of Breath (Pranayama)
(c) Postures (Asanas).

Logically the three should be practised together. It is hardly possible to practise the direction of consciousness without assuming a certain posture or without breathing. On the other hand, it is impossible to breathe or to assume a

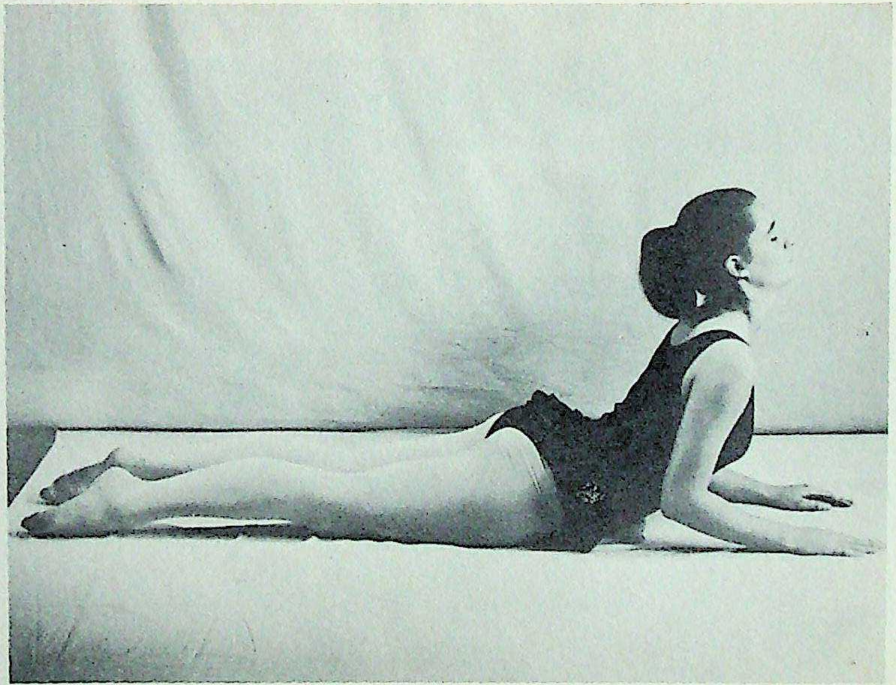


Fig. 8—BHUJANGASANA

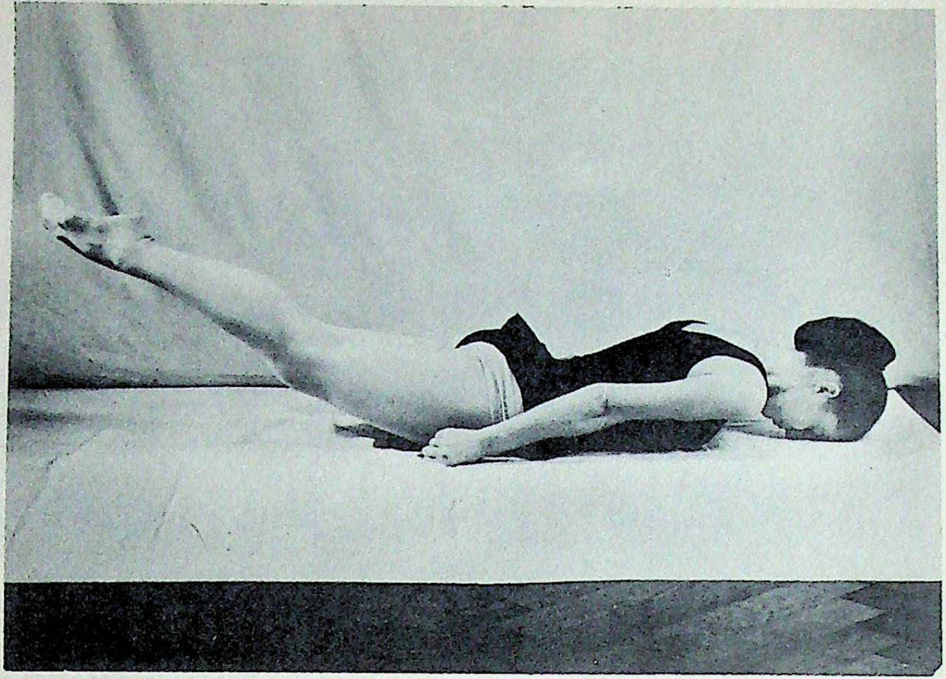


FIG. 9—SALABHASANA

body posture without placing the consciousness somewhere in the body, if nowhere else but in the head. The Yoga exercises prescribe how the three are to be connected in order to obtain the best results.

It will be noted that it is this mental element, the emphasis laid on the direction of the mind to a certain spot in the body which so greatly distinguishes Yoga exercises from western style physical culture. For the Yogi, mind is first, ever and always. The main goal of all the Yoga exercises is to make the body conscious, to direct the consciousness to all parts of the body uniformly, to revitalize the body entirely until we reach a state of development which enables us to produce currents of force consciously with a simple command to the mind.

The seat of our consciousness lies in certain cells of the brain. The theory is that if we place our consciousness, by an act of will, into other nerve centres, they will begin to develop and can become supports of consciousness like the cells of the brain. There are many examples which show that the tasks of a disabled nerve can be taken over by another nerve. Yoga claims that adequate, long and patient practice of concentrating the consciousness will develop any nerve centre thus treated. This much is certain: Concentration of the mind upon the nerve cells of any part of the body will immediately result in a reaction of warmth due to increased blood circulation in that part. It seems plausible, therefore, that long and regular practice should lead to higher development of the nervous centres thus treated.

It is a well-known fact that there are Yogis who are able to exercise astonishing control over functions of the body not ordinarily subject to conscious will, such as the functions of digestion and even of the heart.

The quickening of consciousness, apart from its significance for health has yet another great advantage. It makes it possible for us to realize that consciousness can exist independently from the brain, that is, it is not the product of the brain, such as materialistic philosophy proclaims. It would prove that the "I", the self, has an existence independent from matter. According to Yoga it is the eternal, immortal Self which is the master of the body, and the highest purpose of the Yoga-exercises is to lead us to the realization of this immortal self. This realization cannot be outwardly demonstrated. It is an inner experience which everyone must achieve for himself. The Self is invisible and there is no instrument which can prove its existence. Only in its emanations can we *feel* the self of another person. In developing our consciousness we can learn to know our own Self. All that Yoga can do to prove this truth is to show the way.

There are, however, more immediate and more practical advantages to be gained from the practice of consciousness. We can prevent a cold by concentrating on our feet, if we have to go out in humid weather. We can thus create positive energy and warmth. In the same way we can produce increased blood circulation in any desired part of the body. Strong concentration on the intestinal tract, for example, will induce a strong influx of blood and accelerate action of the tract. The body follows the imagination and adapts itself to it. The direction of the consciousness is not easy. Perseverance is necessary. But regular and repeated attempts will inevitably bear fruit and there is no greater thrill than the victory of the personality over the body.

The various Pranayama exercises and Asanas which we shall describe are a great help in the awakening of the body. Especially inportant here is the regulation of breath. In inhaling we should concentrate ourselves on the idea that we are accumulating more Prana, in exhaling that we are distributing Prana consciously to all parts of the body, or to the part that we have consciously selected. This directing or leading of Prana to a selected part of the body is accomplished by concentrating all our attention on the organ we want to investigate, as though our whole personality were transferred to that part, at the same time "pumping" Prana to that organ with each exhalation. Prana gathers where our consciousness is concentrated. This systematic and prolonged direction of attention upon a particular organ or function with the persistent thought that Prana is flooding that organ—this alone will immediately invigorate and develop that organ or that function. This is the secret of all development, all growth, all life in plant, animal and man. Prana automatically follows consciousness. We have it in our power to profit from this natural law to direct the flow of Prana in a conscious manner.

In turning respiration from an unconscious into a conscious act, we gradually develop and increase our perceptive faculties until finally we can *feel* the fine pulsation of Prana.

In regard to the principal variations of the Yoga-Complete-Breath we shall describe now, it should be mentioned that the most important condition of the regulation of breath is *rhythm*. It is, therefore, expedient to breathe in accordance with a certain measure, in other words to keep time. For this reason we can use, most naturally, the heartbeat as measure. This time-keeping should, however, not absorb our attention but should become an unconscious habit. Remember also that each Pranayama exercise begins with a vigorous exhalation.

Kumbhaka—This breathing exercise can be practised in a sitting position (Sidhasana) or standing, legs slightly apart. We concentrate the attention on the heart. We inhale rhythmically through the nose, according to a selected beat, six or eight for instance, the same as in the Complete Breath. At completion we hold the breath for a pause of four—six—eight beats, beginning with four beats and gradually increasing to six, eight, twelve etc. With practice we can increase the holding of the breath which constitutes Kumbhaka up to thirty-two beats. This increase must be very gradual and always without forcing. We exhale through the nose rhythmically on the same beat as that chosen for inhalation.

This exercise, really the practice of the retention of breath (Kumbhak = retention) regulates the positive and negative body-currents and quiets the nerves. Repeat three times.

Uddjai—Executed in a standing or sitting (Sidhasana) position. Mental attention is fixed on the thyroid (base of neck).

We inhale a complete breath through the nose, six-eight beats. We hold the breath up to eight beats and thereupon exhale, *through the mouth* or rather through the teeth, with a hissing S-sound on a count of sixteen beats, until all the air has been pressed out of the lungs. Inhale immediately and repeat twice.

Kapalabhati—Sitting or standing. We concentrate attention upon the nostrils. We inhale, then exhale vigorously, contracting the abdominal muscles, emptying the lungs with a strong, bellows-like action. Immediately afterwards we relax the abdominal muscles whereby the lower part of the lungs are filled with air. We repeat this contracting and relaxing movement several times in rapid succession. The sound produced is like that of the movement of a bellows. (Kapala = bellows). The whole exercises is really a gymnastics of the diaphragm.

Kapalabhati cleans the nasal cavities, strengthens the mucous membranes and cures the bad and dangerous habit of mouth breathing. The nerves of the solar plexus are stimulated and revitalized. Capacity for concentration is heightened.

If the air ducts of the two nostrils are not equally free, we can vary the exercise in doing Kapalabhati first through one and then the other nostril. Placing the index finger of the right hand on the forehead, we use the middle finger to hold and to close the left nostril, doing Kapalabhati through the right nostril and visa-versa, closing the right nostril with the thumb.

Bhastrika—This exercise is performed in a sitting posture, either Padmasana (lotus-seat) or the easier Sidhasana. We place the right index finger on the forehead between the eyebrows and exhale vigorously. The right thumb holds and closes the right nostril. Now we *inhale* through the left nostril for four beats. Then we hold the breath as long as we are able to without forcing. Now we let go with the thumb and place the middle finger on the left nostril and *exhale* through the right for eight beats. The fingers remain where they are. We *inhale* through the right nostril for four beats, hold the breath eight to sixteen beats. Now we change fingers, placing thumb on right nostril and *exhale* through the left nostril eight beats. We repeat: Inhalation through the left nostril, four beats, holding breath eight-sixteen beats, change fingers, exhale through right nostril eight etc.

Bhastrika balances positive and negative currents. It should not be repeated more than three times. To start with it can be practised on an eight-eight-eight beat or the holding breath period can be dropped altogether. Bhastrika stimulates the mind and enhances the power of concentration.

Cleansing Breath—Standing legs apart, we inhale through the nose, slowly and fully as in Complete Breath. Without pause we exhale, lips firmly pressed against the teeth, through a small opening between the two. We press the air through this opening in many short, abrupt exhalations, as though the breath had to be forced through the teeth, so that the muscles of the diaphragm and abdomen also enter into action. Inhale again and repeat twice.

The cleansing breath eliminates parasites and toxic substances from the blood and increases immunity against illness. A few cycles of this exercise banishes headaches, head colds and grippy feeling. Anyone exposed to the danger of infection should practise the cleansing breath five or six times a day, three times in each cycle. Mentally the cleansing breath helps to increase confidence, courage and cheerfulness.

Nerve-strengthening Breath—Standing, legs apart, we inhale slowly and during inhalation raise both arms forward to shoulder height, palms turned upwards. Closing both hands to a fist, we hold our breath and pull the hands strongly back to shoulder height. This we repeat two or three times. Exhaling, we relax the arms and rest. This exercise is especially beneficial if the arms are stretched out as though they were held back by an opposing force, as though they had to overcome some resistance. It strengthens the nervous system and is a great help against nervous trembling of the hands or head; it assures poise and self-confidence.

Ha-Respiration—Standing, legs apart, we take a complete breath during which we slowly lift our arms above the head. We hold the breath for a few seconds. Then, suddenly bending forward, we relax the arms and let them drop. At the same time we exhale strongly *through the mouth*, forming the sound "Ha". We inhale slowly through the nose, raise ourselves up, lift arms above head whereupon we exhale slowly *through the nose* and drop the arms.

Ha-Respiration quickens blood-circulation, cleanses the respiratory organs and combats chills. Mentally it is accompanied by a feeling of purification. People who are obliged to live frequently in a vitiated atmosphere, like policemen, detectives, physicians etc. will find the Ha-Respiration very beneficial in keeping mentally fit.

Ha-Respiration can also be performed lying on the floor. We inhale as in Complete Breath, at the same time slowly raising the arms above the head. We hold the breath for a few seconds, whereupon we pull up the legs, catching the knees with the arms, pressing them against the body, exhaling *through the mouth* with the "Ha" sound. We rest a few seconds. Raising arms above head we stretch legs upwards, lower them again and exhale slowly through nose, arms held next to the body. We rest and relax.

Bramari—In a sitting position (Sidhasana) we inhale rapidly through the nose and exhale rapidly also through the nose, producing the humming sound of a bee. We do this several times and in the end inhale through the nose, retain the breath as long as we can do so comfortably and then exhale slowly through the nose. This quickens the circulation of the blood.

Sitkari—Sitting or standing. The tip of the tongue touches the upper palate. We inhale through the mouth with a hissing sound. After that we hold the breath for a few beats and then exhale slowly through the nose. This exercise relieves thirst.

Sitali—In this exercise the tongue protrudes a little from the mouth. We inhale through the mouth with a hissing sound. After holding the breath for a few seconds, we exhale slowly through the nose. The effect is similar to that of Sitkari.

These are the main Pranayama exercises, leaving out the more complicated ones, too complicated for western use. The ones we have mentioned can be varied in many ways, combined with movements of arms and legs. Here are a few examples:

(1) We stand with legs apart, inhale slowly through the nose, at the same time raising the arms, palms upwards, until they touch above the head. We retain the breath for a few seconds and then slowly lower the arms and exhale at the same time. We finish with the Cleansing Breath.

(2) Standing, legs apart, we take a complete breath and lift the arms forward to shoulder height, palms turned downwards, Holding our breath we swing the arms backwards as far as we can, then forward, rapidly and rhythmically, repeating a few times. We then exhale through the mouth slowly lowering the arms. This is followed by Cleansing Breath.

(3) Standing, legs apart, we inhale slowly through the nose and lift arms sideways to shoulder height, palms turned downward. Holding our breath we swing the arms, windmill fashion, upwards and backwards three times, then reverse in opposite direction, downwards and backwards three times. We exhale strongly through the mouth at the same time lowering the arms. Finish with Cleansing Breath.

(4) We lie on the floor, face downwards, pressing the palms on the floor at shoulder height. Taking a complete breath we stiffen the body, holding our breath and lift it until it rests only on palms and toes. We let ourselves slowly sink back to the floor, repeat this movement three to five times and exhale through the mouth. Again we finish with Cleansing Breath.

(5) We stand straight with hands on hips. After having taken a complete breath we hold it for a little while, then exhale slowly, bending forward. Again we inhale through the nose, hold breath, exhale, return to original position and bend backwards. Inhaling we return to straight position and

exhaling, bend to the right. Inhaling we return to straight position and exhaling bend to the left. Returning once more to straight position we inhale, hold breath a few seconds and exhale slowly through the nose and lower arms. We finish with Cleansing Breath.

(6) Legs apart, we take a complete breath, but instead of inhaling in one long, uninterrupted breath, we do this in short, rapid draughts, until the lungs are completely filled with air. We hold the breath for a few beats and exhale slowly through the nose.

There are a number of other variations of these breathing exercises but those mentioned are sufficient for anyone practising Hatha-Yoga for his health and should be practised in turn. The more complicated exercises are for students who make Yoga the goal and purpose of their lives and they need the guidance of a master or Guru. All the exercises here mentioned can be done without the slightest danger even by beginners. For the adept also the foregoing exercises are fundamental. The others are meant to develop faculties in which, as a rule, people of the western hemisphere are not interested. The exceptional case will surely find his guide, for, as the saying goes, "When the chela is ready, the guru is there."

Chapter 16

THE ASANAS—YOGA POSTURES

WE have already briefly referred to one of the fundamental differences between any system of western physical culture and the body-exercises which form a part of the system of Hatha-Yoga. All of these exercises, including the Asanas or Postures, are closely connected with a certain direction of the consciousness and the control of breath. It must never be forgotten that apart from the purely physiological effects of the Yoga exercises they are chiefly meant to develop the mutual interplay of the forces between body and soul. The mental effect is increased if the exercises are performed with eyes closed.

The Asanas should preferably be executed on a fairly hard surface, a small mat or carpet, exclusively used fo this purpose. The Yogi begins his exercises with prayer and meditation.

We have already spoken of the sitting postures in our chapter on "How to Sit", but since these postures properly belong to the Asanas, we shall repeat and complete their description here.

1. *Padmasana* (*Lotus-Seat*) (Fig. 1)—We sit on the floor, right foot on the left thigh, left foot across the right on the thigh. The more we press the foot backward against the groin, the more easily we shall succeed. This sitting posture is not an easy one for western men and women, but children learn it rapidly and women more easily than men. Practice and patience will overcome the difficulties, however, and once achieved, the Padmasana posture will be found most restful.

In India the lotus is the symbol of purity and self-assurance. Padmasana represents the perfect balance of the lotus-flower floating in white splendour on the waters of a silent pond. The perfect symmetry of this posture increases the harmony of the distribution of forces, maintains the balance of the positive and negative currents and, combined with breathing exercises regulates the effect of these currents. Padmasana is the best posture for all breathing exercises which are performed in a sitting position. We concentrate on the heart, sit motionless and straight, close the eyes and subject our thoughts to our will, breathing evenly. In this way we store a supply of free energy. The effect can be compared to the damming up of a great stream, the dammed-up waters of which represent immense power. Regular practice of this posture will insure mental and physical stability and quiet the nervous system. Its effect, of course, varies with the breathing exercises which are performed at the same time.

If you do not succeed in placing both the feet on the thighs at the start, keep one foot on one thigh for a while and change. Or you can place the right foot on the left thigh and the left foot underneath the right thigh, a more comfortable posture. Yet another variation consists in placing the left heel at the beginning of the right thigh and the right heel at the beginning of the left thigh. This is called *Samasana*.

2. *Sidhasana*—This is sometimes called The Perfect Pose and comes next to Padmasana in importance. It is easier than Padmasana and can be practised in its place if Padmasana should prove impossible or too tiring. Sidhasana is considered the ideal posture for meditation and contemplation. It is practised by Siddhas, perfect Yogis, whence its name.

Execution: We sit on the floor, the left foot in front of us, then pull the right foot across the left so that it comes to rest on the left thigh.

3. *Vajrasana*—This is called the Adamantine Pose; it resembles somewhat the Nimaz posture in which Moslems sit for prayer. To do it we kneel, then sit on the heels so that the calves touch the thighs. The whole weight of the body is put on knees and ankles which makes it rather difficult

to execute at first. But the pain in the knees and ankle-joints will soon disappear and in time they become very elastic.

4. *Yoga-Mudra* (Fig. 4)—Mudra is the Sanskrit word for Symbol and Yoga-Mudra symbolizes in its pose the prostration of man before the Creator.

We sit in lotus-seat, Sidhasana, or Vajrasana. We take a complete breath and, exhaling, we bend slowly forward as far as we can, if possible until the head touches the ground. In this position we remain as long as we can without taking breath and then, inhaling, return slowly to sitting position and exhale. With the left hand we grasp the right wrist behind our back. The exercise is repeated two or three times.

The principal effect of Yoga-Mudra is the gradual replacement of the organs of the intestinal cavity which have lost their proper place through constipation and degeneration of the stomach and intestinal nerves, into their proper places. This is achieved by means of outer and inner massaging of the muscles and the application of inter-abdominal pressure. Yoga-Mudra also develops the stomach muscles and strengthens the nerves of the loin. Its mental effect is considerable; it promotes humility and submission under the divine will.

5. *Supta-Vajrasana*—This exercise is really a variation of the sitting posture Vajrasana and is called the "sleeping posture". In order to do it well, it is necessary to master Vajrasana, because the strain on the knees is considerable.

With feet backward, knees on the ground, we sit between the two heels. With the use of the elbows we bend backwards until the head comes to rest on the hands locked behind the neck. We breathe quietly and remain in this position as long as we can without undue tension. Attention is concentrated on the solar-plexus.

Supta-Vajrasana makes the spine elastic, stretches the stomach muscles and stimulates the nervous system. It is a regenerating exercise of excellent effect for people with dulled nerves and sluggish glands.

6. *Ardha-Matsyendrasana*—Ardha means half, indicating that the exercise was adapted from an original posture which proved too difficult to be incorporated into the system of Hatha-Yoga. It takes its name from the Yogi Matsyendra who is said to have been a disciple of Lord Siva. A legend says that once Siva went to a lonely island. There he instructed Parvathi, another of his disciples, in the mysteries of Yoga. A fish that happened to be near watched the teachings. When Lord Siva saw this, his heart was touched and he changed the fish into a perfect Yogi and called him Matsyendra.

This is probably the only exercise specially devised to strengthen the spine by means of a left and right twisting movement. Even the adapted half posture presents certain difficulties for the beginner and for this reason a variation has been developed known as *Vakrasana* (screw posture), which we shall describe later. The Ardha Matsyendrasana exercise is executed as follows:

Sitting on the floor, we place the right heel against the beginning of the left thigh. The right leg rests horizontally on the ground. Now the left foot is set over the right thigh. The spine is turned right, the right arm is placed before the left knee and the right hand seizes the left ankle. Now we turn spine and head slowly to the left. With the left arm we reach backwards and with the left hand we seize the left knee. We concentrate attention on the spine and breathe rhythmically. We stay in this posture until we instinctively feel that it is enough. The exercise is then repeated in the opposite direction.

The spine can only be kept in perfect condition if it is exercised in every direction, forward, backward, right and left. A number of Yoga-postures, as we shall see, exercise it in all these directions. The foregoing exercise twists and bends it from side to side. It corrects deviation of the spine, has a beneficial effect on the whole nervous system, on liver, pancreas, kidneys and intestine. Circulation in the spine and its nerve-centres is stimulated. It is one of the most useful exercises in the rich collection of the Asanas.

Easier variations are known under the names of

7. *Vakrasana* (Fig. 5)—With outstretched legs we sit on the floor. We pull in the right leg so that the thigh and knee are pressed firmly against stomach and thorax. The right foot is lifted over the outstretched left leg and placed on the ground next to it. The two palms, fingers outwards, are placed on the floor. Concentrating the mind on the spine, we take three complete breaths and change feet. This is repeated several times. The main effect of this exercise is the same as that of Ardha-Matsyendrasana.

In another variation the position is the same as in the foregoing, right leg pulled up and placed across the left. But here the head turns to the right, so that the spine participates also in this slightly twisting movement. The outstretched right arm is placed behind the back, the left arm and hand before the right knee. The left hand is placed lightly on the ground so that the upper arm presses the right leg backward. Concentrating on the spine, we take three full breaths and change feet, repeating in opposite direction.

8. *Matsyasana* (Fig. 6)—This is the fish-posture. We sit in Padmasana or Sidhasana and with the aid of the elbows lie backwards, arching the chest so that the crown of the head comes to rest on the ground. Hands behind the head, we breath easily, avoiding all tension. Concentration is on the thyroid.

Matsyasana eliminates stiffness of the neck and exercises muscles of the neck and back. Circulation in the neck and its organs is increased, making this exercise valuable in case of colds and inflammation of the tonsils.

9. *Pashimottana*—Lying on back, we bend the arms backward. Inhaling, we rise slowly, holding arms above head, then, exhaling, we bend slowly forward as far as possible. The knees must remain rigid. Head is bent on knees, elbows to the ground. Inhaling again, we raise ourselves and return to original position. (See Fig. 7).

Exhaling, we place arms next to body. We concentrate attention on the solar plexus.

Young people with very supple spines can touch the knees with the forehead. For older people with more rigid spines, it may take a little while before they can bend that far forward. Those who find it too difficult to do the full Pashimottana can do a half posture with one leg and one hand and then with the other leg and hand. As soon as the spine has become more supple, the complete posture should prove much easier.

This exercise is a wonderful gymnastics of the intestinal organs; the stomach muscles are strengthened, as they remain contracted during the entire exercise. The functioning of the organs of the abdomen, the loins, small of the back is controlled by a nerve-centre called lumbo sacralis and two other small plexi. All these are exercised by Pashimottana. It prevents functional disturbances of the stomach, liver, kidneys and intestines. It is invaluable as a preventive of constipation. Liver and kidneys are stimulated and with them, the appetite. It is almost as specific against obesity and reduces the abdomen and develops slender hips. The sexual organs, rectum, prostate, uterus and bladder, respectively their nerves are amply supplied with blood and stimulated thereby. The spine becomes supple.

The exercise is rather difficult to begin with, especially for men. But practice will render the spine gradually more elastic. In view of its manifold advantages and the unrivalled gymnastic of the abdominal muscles, Pashimottana is rightly called a source of vitality. The same exercise can be performed standing and is then called Padahastasana.

10. *Uddiyana-Bandha* (Contraction of Abdomen). Standing, with legs apart, body bent slightly forward, hands with outstretched arms put on thighs, we take a complete breath and slowly exhale. The abdomen is then contracted as though the intestinal organs had to be lifted up to the diaphragm. Pressing the hands on the thighs, tensing the upper back muscles will be of help in this lifting movement. Con-

tinuous practice will bring proficiency. This exercise is to be performed with an empty stomach only.

Practically all of the Yoga postures are at the same time exercises in combatting intestinal sluggishness. It must not be forgotten that in most cases constipation is the consequence of chronic intestinal catarrh. Against this "fashionable illness" of modern civilization, India has given us the sovereign remedy of the two Asanas: Uddiyana Bandha and its variation, Nauli. In these postures, the intestines and diaphragm are lifted, the intestinal contents are compressed, thereby favouring peristalsis, the nerves regulating intestinal movement are stimulated. This exercise is also a preventive of lapse of stomach, of the intestines and the uterus. It can be practised in a sitting posture (Sidhasana) as well.

Of Uddiyana Bandha, Swami Sivananda, who conducts a famous Yoga school near Rishikesh in the Himalayas, says: "Uddiyana is a blessing to humanity. It imparts health, strength, vigour and vitality to the practitioner. Uddiyana and Nauli stand unrivalled amongst all systems of physical culture in the east and the west."

11. *Nauli*—This posture is a variation of Uddiyana Bandha, the isolation of the rectus muscle of the stomach. There are really four variations, isolation of the central rectus, right rectus, left rectus and finally a turning, circular movement of the rectus called Nauli Kria.

All these exercises belong to the more difficult ones. The rectus abdominis and the other stomach muscles have to be contracted and then pressed forward until they protrude, which is a difficult thing to do, as these muscles are not ordinarily subject to our will. The exercises are practised like Uddiyana. We inhale a full breath and exhale strongly. We then do Uddiyana, at the same time contracting the stomach muscles, the two recti, pushing them out and forward. In order to isolate the right or the left rectus we bend to the right or left. If necessary, we can help the isolation of the muscles with a pressure of the hand on the abdomen.

The mastery of the exercises may take weeks or even months and the help of a teacher may be necessary. The most difficult one is Nauli Kria, the circular movement of the stomach muscles. After having done Uddiyana, we move the hips like in a hula-hula dance and transfer this slow movement of the stomach to the isolated rectus muscles. The exercise is performed after exhalation and without breathing. Take a full breath after completion.

The effects of Nauli are those of Uddiyana. All the organs of the intestinal cavity receive an automatic massage and their activity is stimulated. Involuntary ejaculation is prevented.

12. *Trikonasana* (Triangle Posture). We stand erect and keep legs two feet apart. We lift the arms sideways to shoulder height, palms turned upward and inhale. The arms should be parallel to the ground. Now bend slowly to the right and exhale. The left knee must be kept straight and stiff. This is important. Touch the right foot with the fingers of the right hand. In this position the arms are stretched out vertically, face is turned upwards. Inhaling, we raise the body and exhaling, we turn to the left. We repeat a few times and finally lower arms, exhaling. The attention throughout is concentrated on the spine.

Trikonasana gives very good lateral exercise to the spine. Yoga pays particular attention to the health of the spine, since a healthy spine favours the sitting postures and meditation. This Asana tonifies the spinal nerves and the abdominal organs and is a help in the relief of constipation.

13. *Bhujangasana*—Bhujanga in Sanskrit means cobra. In this posture, the raised head and body resemble the raised hood of a cobra, whence the name.

Lying flat on the stomach, we place both hands, palms downward, just below the shoulders and elbows and relax all muscles and are at ease. We then take a complete breath, slowly lifting our head as far as we can. We then lift and bend shoulders and body steadily backwards without the aid

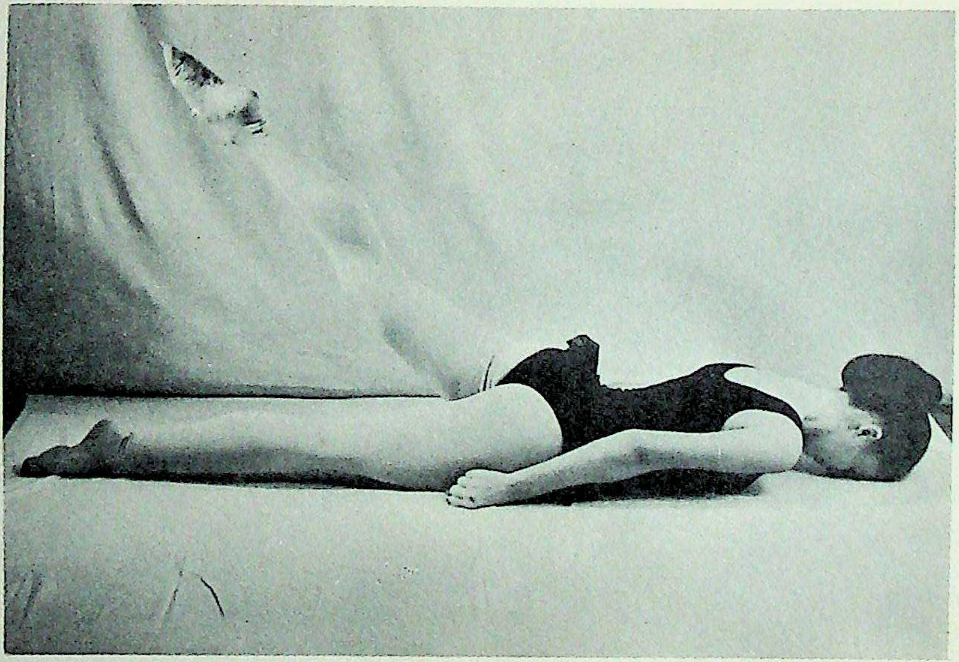


FIG. 10—ARDHA-SALABHASANA

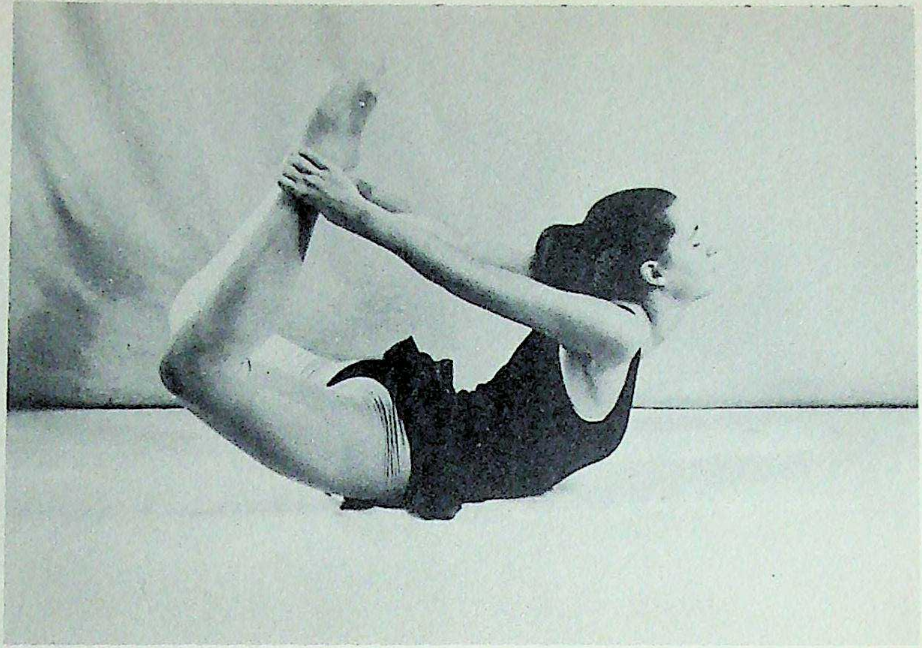


FIG. 11—DHANURASANA

of the arms which are used as supports. Now we feel the pressure from the neck slowly descending the spine as we bend even farther back. In the last phase of the movement it is permissible to help with the arms, but the lower part of the body must stay close to the ground. Holding our breath we stay in this position for a few seconds and then glide back to the original position while we exhale. We concentrate attention first on the neck, then following the spine down to small of back. Repeat several times.

This posture increases inter-abdominal pressure and stretches the rectus muscles of the abdomen. The spine and the sympathetic nerve-cells receive a fresh supply of blood. The spine gradually becomes more supple and in time curvatures of the spine are corrected. The effect also extends to the lower abdominal and back muscles. All the vertebrae and ligaments are stretched and put to work. On the nerve chains situated near the spine, this exercise has a powerfully stimulating effect. The blood circulation in the kidneys is quickened and kidney-stone formation is prevented. During the exercise the blood is pressed out of the kidney-basin and when the body returns to the original position, a stream of blood floods the kidneys and eventual deposits are washed away. The thyroid is stimulated. Bhujangasana, like most of the Hatha-Yoga postures differs from the usual western physical culture exercises in that it requires a "holding out" for a certain length of time in a given position.

14. *Ardha-Bhujangasana*—We rest on the left knee, put the right foot forward until the leg stands straight. Full Yoga breath. Exhaling, we put the weight from the left knee on the right foot and lower the body until hands touch the ground. The spine is held stiff. We remain in this position for a few seconds without drawing breath. Then we rise, inhaling. This we repeat three times and change feet. In a variation of this exercise, body and head are turned to left and right. This Asana is designed to maintain and enhance flexibility of the bone structure and to prevent fatty deposits on the hips.

15. *Salabhasana*—This posture resembles a locust and its name derives from the Sanskrit word for locust which is Salabh. Lying flat on the stomach we make fists and place them on the ground next to the legs. Forehead and nose touch the ground. Now we inhale deeply, hold our breath, press the outstretched arms and fists firmly against the ground and lift the legs from the hips as high as we can. We keep this posture for a few seconds and then bring the legs down slowly and exhale. (See Fig. 9). A considerable effort is necessary to execute this exercise and it should only be done gradually and without forcing. The mind should be concentrated on the lower vertebrae.

The effect of this posture is surprising. As a result of the unnatural way of life of most people, an ever increasing number are suffering from chronic constipation. Lack of exercise causes a relaxation of the intestinal walls, due to insufficient blood circulation in these parts and enervates the intestinal nerves. Most of the Yoga postures have a beneficial influence on intestinal activity, but among them, Salabhasana is probably the most effective and will radically do away with the most obdurate case of constipation. The concentrated contraction of the abdominal muscles affects also the digestive glands and increases the blood supply of the mucous membranes. At the same time, Salabhasana greatly strengthens all the back muscles. Incidentally, it does away with lumbago.

There is a variation of Salabhasana which requires less effort and which can be practised if Salab proves too arduous or as training for it. It is called Ardha-Salabhasana. As the name indicates, (ardha meaning half) it is executed the same way as Salabhasana except that instead of lifting both feet together, we alternate the lifting of the feet. The effects are about the same.

16. *Dhanurasana*—This is the bow-posture, from dhanur, which means bow. The body in this exercise resembles a bent bow. Lying flat on the stomach, we reach back with both hands, after having bent the legs, and seize the ankles

We arch the back inwards and remain in this position as long as we comfortably can, breathing slowly and concentrating on the lower back. The knees should be kept close together. The whole body rests on the abdomen and the Dhanura posture should therefore be assumed with an empty stomach only. Once we have gained some proficiency, we can impart a sideways and forward and backward movement to the body. (See Fig. 11).

This exercise has a stimulating effect on the glandular system, especially also on the sex glands. Men as well as women suffering from reduced sexual activity will greatly benefit by it and will retain their youthful vigour until an advanced age. The stimulation of the thyroid enhances the development of this gland and for this reason children with somewhat retarded mental development should practise this posture daily. It is also recommended in disturbances of menstruation. The whole spine and all of its nerve centres are strengthened thereby and rendered more supple. The stimulating effect of this posture on the glandular system as well as the flexion and contraction of the muscles makes it one of the best reducing exercises. This effect is enhanced, if during the exercise we rock back and forth, or sideways. Dhanurasana seems difficult at first, as the untrained spine is stiff and will not bend at once, but practice will soon overcome the difficulty. For people obliged to sit through most of the day, it is a blessing as it eliminates all pain and fatigue. It should be avoided in cases of excessive glandular functioning of any sort.

For curiosity's sake only, we mention another posture called *Akarshana Dhanurasana* although the resemblance with the exercise described above is only faint. But its effects are those of Dhanurasana.

In this we spread the legs in a sitting position and catch the right toe with the left hand. We slowly bend the left leg and bring the toes to chin level and the knee near to the left arm-pit. Now the left thigh will touch the abdominal region. Finally we seize the left toe with the right hand and draw the elbow back as far as possible.

17. *Mayurasana*—Mayur means peacock in Sanskrit. The posture resembles a peacock spreading its tail-feathers. It is one of the more difficult Asanas and demands physical strength, corresponding as it does, to a gymnastic exercise on parallel bars.

We kneel on the ground and sit on the toes. Then we raise the heels, join the two forearms and place the palms of the two hands on the ground. The palms are turned outward. This is to steady the fore-arms which have to support the body in the ensuing elevation of the trunk and legs. The elbows, close together, are pressed against the stomach. Now we lift the head, bring down the abdomen against the joined elbows, stretch the legs, so that the arms are our only support.

Beginners will find it difficult at first to keep the balance. It may be well to place a pillow in front to cushion a fall forward. If it seems too difficult to stretch the two legs at one stroke, we can stretch one leg at a time. When completed, head, trunk, legs and feet will be in one straight line and parallel to the ground. We retain the breath for a moment in raising the body, hold the posture for a few seconds and exhale.

Mayurasana is principally an exercise of balance. It has a regenerating effect on the nerves of the abdomen and the abdominal cavity, stimulates the intestine and combats constipation. It belongs to the exercises increasing inter-abdominal pressure which, together with increased blood circulation, contributes to the strengthening of the abdominal organs. The functioning of the pancreas is stimulated, thereby preventing and even curing diabetes.

18. *Sarvangasana*—In Sanskrit "sarva" means whole and "anga" means body. Sarvangasana, therefore, is the posture engaging all parts of the body. Indeed it belongs to the most important Hatha-Yoga exercises. Its effects extend to the entire body and it has such a beneficial influence that everybody should perform it several times daily. The secret of its extraordinary effect is partly due to the fact that in this pos-

ture, we receive the cosmic radiations in reverse. The earth releases negative radiations while from the cosmos we receive positive rays. In our ordinary posture we therefore receive negative radiation through the soles of our feet and positive radiation through the top of our heads. In the Yoga exercises called Sarvangasana, Viparita-Karani and Sirshasana (which see) the effect is in the reverse. This, in part, explains their curative effect.

To execute Sarvangasana we lie on our practice blanket, on the back. The outstretched arms and hands, palms downward, are pressed against the ground. We slowly lift the outstretched legs to a vertical position without bending the knees. Then we lift the body and support it with both hands in the small of the back, until the body and feet are brought into line and stand vertically. The chin is pressed against the chest in what is called Julandra-Bandha, chin-lock. We breathe lightly and remain in this position as long as we feel like it, only a very short time to begin with. Shoulders and neck should touch the ground closely, the legs kept straight. Now we lower the legs slowly and gracefully until we return to original position. We rest for a minute, breathing evenly. During the exercise, concentration is on the thyroid, on the front lower part of the neck. (See Figs. 12 and 13).

As you can see, this important exercise is so simple that every child can do it. Twice daily practice of Sarvangasana for two months will bring about a decided change for the better in blood circulation, general metabolism and mental attitude. In order to appreciate these effects, we must first take into account the merely physical influence of this posture. As we have mentioned, it transmits to us the earthly and cosmic radiations in reverse order. The same is true for the gravitational forces. The organs which in the standing position are above and therefore receive a lesser blood supply,—since the heart has to overcome gravitation and pump the blood into the organs of the neck and head—these organs are now placed below. The blood can thus flow into them without any special effort by the heart. In Sarvangasana, the heart is at rest, such as it enjoys not even in the horizontal position. At the same time the lungs and all the organs of the neck receive a renewed supply of blood. In pressing the chin against the chest we prevent an all too strong influx of blood to the head while abdominal breathing prevents stagnation. Nevertheless, the blood vessels of the neck are filled with blood, so that the hilus, tonsils, thymus and the lungs receive ample nourishment. For this reason, Sarvangasana is the most effective rejuvenator of these organs.

The thyroid is the organ of intercalation in time; it regulates our movements, speech, power of thought etc. People with a defective or poorly functioning thyroid are unable to compete with their fellows. They are always late, because their time-sense is defective. Their heart-beat is slow and all their other functions are retarded. People with excessively functioning thyroids, on the other hand, are always in a hurry, they breathe rapidly; their heart-beat is too rapid and their manner of speech is often unintelligible. These deviations from the normal are corrected through the practice of Sarvangasana and some other Asanas which we shall describe hereafter.

The organs of the abdomen which, in the normal body position, due to the law of gravity are abundantly supplied with blood, are now placed above and thereby, for a while, receive a lesser supply of blood. The blood-vessels contract and regain their elasticity. Medical research has shown that the blood-vessels have a surprising capacity for regeneration. Sufferers from varicose veins and haemorrhoids will experience great improvement through the practice of this exercise. The enlarged veins are reduced to normal size. People whose work obliges them to stand for long hours will derive great benefit from Sarvangasana.

Sarvangasana is particularly beneficial for women. It rests the reproductive organs, liberating them for a time from an excessive blood supply. For this same reason, Sarvangasana is highly recommended to young people during puberty or for those wishing to live a celibate life as it prevents undesirable erections and ejaculations.

Sarvangasana has no ill effects. Lost youth, vitality and energy gradually return. The functioning of the glands of internal secretion is normalized and the whole organism regenerated.

If you desire healthy mental development for your children, let them practise Sarvangasana daily, morning, noon and night. Their bodily growth depends to a great extent on the thymus gland, on which Sarvangasana has a tonic effect. Adults, on the other hand, practise it in order to maintain youthful vigour until late in life. Old age does not have to signify sickness and decrepitude. Yogis and their western disciples have proven the contrary. It is indeed possible to maintain a perfect body up to a ripe old age.

19. *Viparita-Karini*—Viparita = reverse, Karani = effect. As the name of this exercise indicates, and as already mentioned in the description of Sarvangasana, we receive the cosmic radiations in reverse fashion in performing it. At the same time, the name refers to the reversed position of the body and the reversal of time. In standing on our feet we age, in the Viparita-Karanis position we are getting younger.

Lying on the back, we lift our feet and, supporting the hips with our hands, we slowly raise the body to the height of the shoulders. Then we lower the feet a little above the head—which is what distinguishes this exercise from Sarvangasana—as well as the fact that in Viparita-Karani we do not support the upper body, but the hips. In breathing slowly (abdominal breath), we prevent too great a slowing down of blood circulation. We remain in this position as long as we can do so without strain and return slowly to original position. We practise a few complete breaths before we rise. (See Fig. 14).

The effects of this posture are very much the same as those of Sarvangasana. In India it is often used as a preventive of Basedow and goitre in children. Illness of the respiratory organs is prevented, especially if Viparita-Karani is practised in conjunction with a tongue exercise called Simhasana (which see). In many cases, a beginning cold or a tonsil inflammation can be cured in this way. Viparita-Karani is also a beauty treatment and therefore a favourite of women; it prevents and smoothes wrinkles; it irrigates the skin with blood and this natural treatment is worth many an expensive massage or beauty mask.

20. *Sirshasana*—This posture is considered as the third in importance among the Asanas. Sirsha in Sanskrit means head and Sirshasana is nothing else but the familiar "standing on the head". In order to do so, Yoga fashion, we kneel down and lay the folded hands in front of us on the ground. Bending forward, we put the head into the open palms. With the aid of the feet we raise the hips, then the feet, bend the knees and, stretching the legs, we bring the body into a straight vertical line. We stand on the head. In this position we stay as long as we can without forcing, breathing evenly. In returning to the original position, we first bend the knees and assume a kneeling posture, finally stretching out on the ground. Any sudden movement must be avoided, as this would nullify the effect of the exercise. For the same reason we should rest a few minutes before rising, so that the blood circulation may readjust itself. (See Figs. 15a, 15b, 15c.)

Sivananda calls this posture "a blessing and a nectar". The brain receives a plentiful influx of blood and Prana. The brain is the seat of our consciousness and a mighty centre of energy on whose perfect functioning depends our human value. Our intellectual faculties, all our senses, the correct functioning of our nervous system, all depend upon the quality and soundness of the nerve-centres of the brain. Sirshasana has, for its purpose, the regular functioning and the development of the brain.

In the normal body-position, the heart pumps the blood into the brain against the force of gravity. In a horizontal position, the job of the heart is already made somewhat easier and the blood supply more ample, especially if we take care to lie flat, without pillow. In Sirshasana this is the case to an even higher degree.

Many of the nervous conditions affecting modern man are due to an insufficient blood supply of the brain. The beginning symptoms are rapid fatigue, followed by progressive loss of memory, nervous trembling of hands and feet, weakening of sight and hearing, melancholia, depression etc., all disturbances often due to lack of nourishment of the brain.

The very first attempt at practising Sirshasana floods the brain, the ears, eyes, nose and mouth, tonsils, thyroid etc. with a rich supply of blood. The heart is temporarily relieved and rests. The truly remarkable effects of Sirshasana are almost too numerous to mention. What should by all means be mentioned, however, is that the dangers sometimes ascribed to Sirshasana are purely imaginary. Of course, people with high blood pressure should not attempt to do any of the reverse Asanas, such as Sirshasana, Viparita-Karani and Sarvangasana.

Apart from their beneficial influence on the general state of health, these three Asanas share another advantage. The brain contains certain nerve-centres, which in people of an average degree of development have never been used and are existing in a latent condition. These centres are well known to the Indian Yogi and he also knows how to awaken and activate them. All of the Hatha-Yoga exercises, but especially Sarvangasana, Viparita-Karani and Sirshasana, have a stimulating effect on these nerve-centres and may awaken faculties unknown to the average man or woman, such as clairvoyance, telepathy etc. These can be developed by all serious students of Hatha-Yoga. Anyone can develop his nerve centres to a degree unknown to ordinary men and women if he will take the necessary time and pains.

21. *Halasana*—This is the plough-posture, hala in Sanskrit meaning plough. For this we lie on our practice blanket with outstretched arms, hands next to thighs, palms downwards. Like in Viparita-Karani, we lift both feet, but do not remain with the feet in the air. We bend them backward, over the head, until the toes reach the ground. The arms remain where they are. This is the first phase. The next one is a little

more difficult. While, in the first phase the toes remain close to the head, we must now endeavour to place them farther to the back. At the same time we breathe deeply and keep the knees straight. In this second phase, tension in the spine shifts upwards. In a third phase, we try to shift the feet still more to the back and at the same time we place the arms back of the neck. We remain thus for a few moments and then return to original position. (See Fig. 16).

In Halasana, the inner side of the spine is pressed together and the outer side put under tension. The beneficial effect extends to every vertebra. The nerve-centres and nerve cells along the spine are stimulated, as they receive a more abundant supply of blood. The muscles of the back are powerfully exercised and the spine made elastic. He who practises Halasana becomes nimble, agile, energetic and active. Halasana eliminates fatigue and exhaustion and restores fresh vigour almost at once. It affects not only the nerves, but also the vertabrae which are stretched and placed in the correct position. Faulty posture is corrected by Halasana. In deviations of the spine in children, the exercise is especially beneficial. For the organs of the abdominal cavity, the sex glands, pancreas and kidneys it has a rejuvenating effect. It prevents, naturally, any accumulation of fat on abdomen and hips, so that people who take pride in their "line" have every interest in practising Halasana, as it will preserve slimness and elegance of form. Halasana, incidentally, is a wonderful remedy for headaches. For the development of the spine and back muscles it is unsurpassed.

Halasana should be practised cautiously; the bending backwards should be done slowly, carefully and without forcing. With practice, even the stiffest spine will soon become flexible.

22. *Some Eye Exercises*—The following exercises are a great help in maintaining normal sight and in developing a power of concentration.

We sit in Sidhasana posture, take a Complete Breath and then, breathing evenly, concentrate the glance of both eyes on the space between the eyes, at the root of the nose. As soon as we get tired, we make a little pause and then continue as before. We finish with the Complete Breath and relax.

Another exercise is excellent for maintaining the eyes in good condition until late in life. We sit in Sidhasana posture and look straight ahead of us. Inhaling deeply, we turn the eyeballs as far as we can to the right. Exhaling slowly, we return to normal position. Again we inhale slowly and deeply and turn the eyes to the left, exhaling, we return eyes to centre. This we repeat three times.

The same effect is obtained in rolling the eyes. We look straight ahead. Exhaling, we lower the eyes. Slowly inhaling, we turn the eyeballs to the right and upwards to centre. We hold the breath for a second, then exhaling, we turn the eyes to the left and downwards to centre. Again we inhale and turn eyes right etc. until the circle has been completed three times. After a little pause, we do the same exercise in reverse direction. Tired eyes are refreshed and after a few weeks of regular training in this fashion they are regenerated. In all these eye exercises, it is important that the attention be fully concentrated, that we practise consciously and slowly.

23. *Simhasana*—Hatha-Yoga does not neglect a single important body muscle. It therefore cannot forget the tongue. An exercise has been devised for this organ which will render you practically immune against a number of afflictions of the neck and throat. It is called Simhasana and is practised seated and breathing evenly. The tongue is bent backwards and pressed against the palate. Now the chin is pressed against the chest and the tongue stretched out as far as possible. This we repeat a dozen times, each time arching the tongue and pressing it against the palate.

A civilized person of our hemisphere would, of course, consider it in exceedingly bad taste to stretch out his tongue. He has not done so since early childhood except, perhaps, during a medical examination. Too bad! Just as mere walking is not enough to keep leg and thigh muscles in good shape, so the exercise given the tongue in speaking and chewing is not enough. Certain medical experiences undertaken at a Yoga research centre in India have shown that this tongue exercise constitutes an excellent gymnastics of the neck muscles and results in a better blood circulation of the nerves and glands in this region of the body. The throat receives a kind of a massage. The thyroid is strengthened; hearing is improved; secretion of saliva becomes more abundant and inflammation of the tonsils is checked. This exercise is usually combined with Viparita-Karani.

24. *Savasana*—For the sake of completeness we repeat here the description of Savasana, although we have already discussed it in the chapter on relaxation. As we said there, Savasana is an imitation or adaptation of the secret of animal relaxation. Since it is practised as a rest after the Yoga exercises, it properly belongs also here. (See Fig. 3.)

Lying on our back, both arms stretched out near the body, legs outstretched, feet slightly apart, we relax and reduce breathing. We rest. Then, beginning with the feet, we first tense and immediately afterwards relax every muscle and group of muscles. We concentrate our attention on every muscle in turn, first contracting then relaxing it. We start with the muscles of the feet and work up through calves, thighs, abdomen, arms, shoulders, neck and head, forehead, mouth, hands, until the whole body is completely relaxed. We think of nothing except peace and rest.

In this posture the whole nervous system is at rest, the circulation is harmonized, distribution of blood regular. The venous circulation is easier, high blood pressure diminishes. The heart feels at ease. It is said that ten minutes of this complete relaxation, with reduced breathing, with the attention concentrated on the idea of rest is worth a whole night's sleep. ... Savasana might be called active passivity since we draw all activity of the self into the heart and thus obtain somewhat the same condition as in sleep—but fully awake.

24a—*Advasana*—This is a variation of Savasana with the same benefits. Instead of lying on the back we lie on the stomach, hands at the sides, abdomen and chest well to the ground. Relax as indicated under Savasana. Keep the right cheek to the ground for a while and then the left cheek.

24b. *Jeshtikasana*—This is another exercise for relaxation. The only difference, in this posture we keep the hands by the side of the head instead of placing them alongside the body.

And thus we have come to the end of the Asanas, at least of those which are important and sufficient to attain the goal of Hatha-Yoga in preparation for the higher Yogas, of which we shall speak presently. The exercises described can be mastered by all, old or young, man, woman and child. It is, of course, impossible to practise all of them during the same session. A schedule at the end of this chapter will show you the best combinations to follow.

Merely for the sake of information we shall describe a few Asanas of a more complicated nature, such as are practised by advanced Yogis. It may amuse you to try them as you would an exercise in acrobatics. That is really all they are, and whether you master them or not is of no importance as far as your progress in Yoga is concerned. The exercises given above will assure you of that.

Gomukhasana—The name comes from the Sanskrit word Gomukha which means cowface. The posture is said to resemble the face of a cow, although, personally, we do not quite see it that way. Anyway, here is how it is done:

The left leg is turned under and we sit on the left heel. The right leg is placed in such a way that the right knee comes to stand above the left knee and the right foot, sole inwards, is placed in close contact with the left thigh. We sit erect. Now we make a finger-lock of the index and middle fingers of each hand at the back, which is no easy matter! But it can be done, and women and children, as a rule, succeed more quickly than men. The left hand is taken to the back, the left index finger raised, the right index finger is stretched downwards and catches hold of the left index finger. This lock is kept as long as possible while breathing easily. The body should not be turned, head and chest kept straight. Change hands and legs alternately.

It is said that this Asana cures rheumatism and sciatica, muscular pains in the back and neuralgia of the legs and thighs.

Garudasana—Garuda is the eagle and Garudasana the eagle-posture. To do this we stand quite straight, placing the right leg firmly on the ground. Now we lift the left leg, so that the left thigh crosses the right thigh. The left calf and foot wind around the right leg "like a creeper winds around a tree", as Sivananda puts it. The same procedure is followed with the arms, one arm winding around the other. The palms of the hands should touch each other. The hands are kept in front of the face. Legs and hands are changed alternately. Some Yogis succeed in bending the leg and touching the ground with the toes of the encircling leg. It is said that the hands and legs are lengthened by this Asana. But it is really an exercise in balance.

Chakrasana—This posture is often demonstrated by Fakirs in Indian streets. It can only be performed by a person with a very flexible spine. As it resembles a circle, it is called Circle posture, Chakrasana in Sanskrit.

Standing, the hands are raised above the head. Slowly we bend backwards. When the hands reach hip level, the legs are slowly bent at the knees. Carefully we bend even more until we are able to touch the ground with our hands. It is evident that anyone practising this posture and succeeding in it will have perfect control of his body. To Indians, elasticity of the spine means everlasting youth.

Having arrived at the conclusion of the description of the Asanas, there will be no doubt readers who have the impression that some of the Hatha-Yoga exercises are not very different from western physical culture exercises and that others are mere acrobatic stunts. Such an opinion is not entirely unfounded and even Indians have held or are holding it. The nineteenth century Indian Saint Ramakrishna thought that the purpose of Hatha-Yoga was long life and the acquisition of occult powers. He thought that it had to do with the body only in that it tried to subject the power of Prana to the service of the physical organs. He pronounced Hatha-Yoga bad and Raja-Yoga good, forgetting that Hatha-Yoga, properly understood and properly practised, is merely a *preparation* for the latter. There are, of course, practitioners of Hatha-Yoga who practise the art for the sake of physical prowess alone, like the Yogi who prided himself in knowing by heart the dozens of Asanas. Most assuredly, the physical strength imparted to the body by regular practice of the Asanas is by no means to be despised. Remember only that this is not a goal in itself, but merely a means to the development of the whole personality. The body is an instrument. Hatha-Yoga tunes it so that God may play on it.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS TO HATHA-YOGA STUDENTS

The best time to practise is the early morning because, at that time, body and mind are rested, calm and receptive. Be regular in rising, retiring, in practising. Be moderate, moderate in habits, speech and in thought. Avoid worry, avoid negative thoughts; be positive and optimistic. Never allow negative feelings, hatred, anger, vanity, jealousy and other low feelings to touch your soul. Negative emotions poison body and soul; positive thinking and feeling will create the things you desire.

Watch your diet. If you have been a meat eater, change gradually to a diet of natural food, greens, vegetables, whole cereals, fruit, milk and milk products, honey. Avoid fabricated and complicated dishes. Drink water or wine; avoid alcohol; avoid tobacco.

Discipline your body to have regular bowel movements. Many of the Asanas will help you to do so, such as Yoga-Mudra, Uddijana, Nauli etc.

Again, be moderate in eating, drinking, sleeping and everything else. The middle path is the safe path. Observe the golden medium, then you will soon become a Yogi. Be scrupulously clean without as within, cultivate serenity and detachment. Always remember that in the skies of your own soul you yourself are the sun!

Each month, at new moon and at full moon keep a day of fasting and a day of silence. The day will increase your energies and your will and your health will profit.

Practise Yoga in a separate room, if possible a retreat all your own. Let it be simple, clean, harmonious. When you enter it, leave the world and its cares outside. Practise on a clean rug or mat, which is used for no other purpose, your face turned to the east.

Begin your practice with eliminating all sense of discouragement. Look to the future with all confidence and begin your deep breathing with faith in the power of Yoga to give you health, joy and peace. Always keep in mind the goal which is liberation. Asanas are not merely physical exercises, they have a spiritual basis. They will help you in controlling your senses, mind and body. They will awaken in you spiritual powers. Do not think any more of your worldly concerns than is necessary to determine your duty. Do your duty and leave the rest to God-Sivananda.

HOW TO PRACTISE

The Hatha-Yoga exercises are to give us control over body and mind. The practice of the Asanas in conjunction with Pranayama will give us control over the body. The concentrated attention fixed upon the part of the body indicated in the description of the various Asanas is meant to teach us watchfulness of a higher order, to discipline our thoughts, our mind.

It would, of course, be impossible to practise all the exercises described in this volume at one session. At the Yoga-Ashrams or schools, the Guru supervises the practice of his pupils and prescribes the exercises most suitable for the individual student. There are a number of Asanas and Pranayama exercises which are fundamental and which

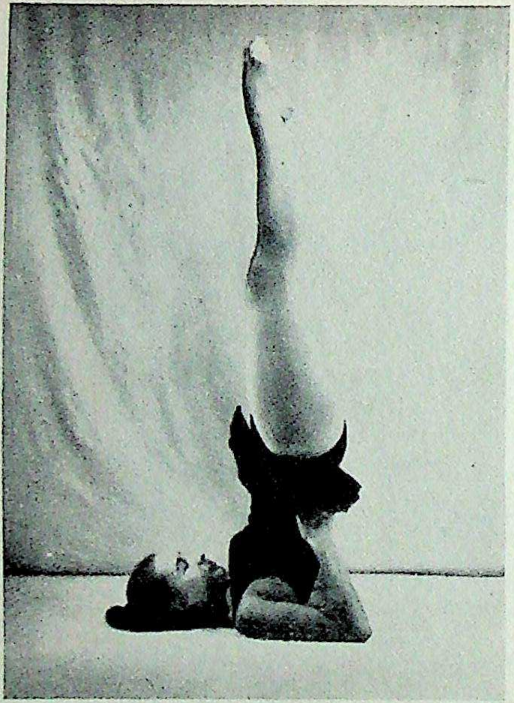


FIG. 12—SARVANGASANA

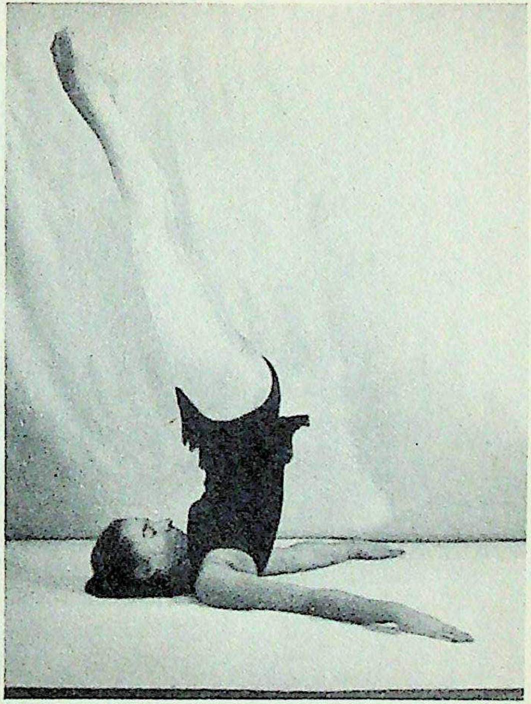


FIG. 13—SARVANGASANA

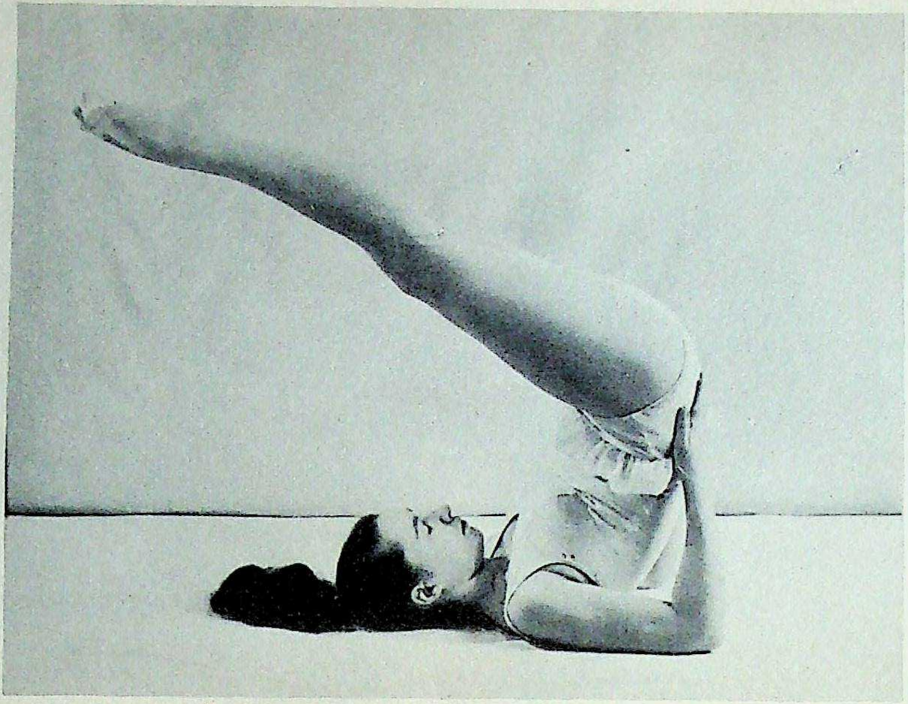


FIG. 14—VIPARITA-KARANI

should be practised regularly by everyone. The selection of others is, more or less, a matter of personal choice, depending upon aptitude and temperament. There are Yogis who think that it is best never to change the Asanas and to adhere tenaciously to the set once chosen. We believe that the best course to follow is to practise all of the exercises contained in this book according to the weekly schedule hereafter and which, in every week, contains the fundamental exercises which should always be included in whatever personal selection you may eventually make. In this way you will gradually evolve a set of exercises which suit you best. This is common sense.

Among the exercises given in the following schedule there is one, always the ninth, which is followed by the relaxation exercise, Savasana. This ninth exercise is one of meditation and is meant to train us in the disciplining of our thoughts. During the few minutes of this exercise, we sit in Sidhasana posture, eliminate every thought, concentrate on the heart and regulate the breath until it becomes quite slow and even. We sit straight and still and experience perfect peace. All our attention is fixed on the heart as though our very self were entering into it. Thus we meditate, radiating serene calm and repose. Then, maintaining peace in our hearts, we lie down and terminate the exercise with Savasana.

SCHEDULE OF EXERCISES

1st Week

1.	Complete Breath in Sidhasana (p. 65)	6 times
2.	Uddjai (p. 71)	3 ,,
3.	Vakrasana (p. 81)	2 ,,
4.	Yoga-Mudra (p. 79)	2 ,,
5.	Matyasana (p. 81)	2 ,,
6.	Bhujangasana (p. 84)	3 ,,
7.	Viparita-Karani (p. 91)	3 ,,
8.	Cleansing Breath (sitting) (p. 73)	2 ,,
9.	Meditation	5 mins.
10.	Savasana (p. 96)	5 ,,

2nd Week

1.	Complete Breath	6	times
2.	Kapalabathi (p. 72)	3	,,
3.	Bhastrika (p. 72)	3	,,
4.	Vakrasana (p. 81)	2	,,
5.	Halasana (p. 93)	2	,,
6.	Supta-Vajrasana (p. 79)	2	,,
7.	Ardha-Salabhasana (p. 86)	2	,,
8.	Trikonasana (p. 84)	3	,,
9.	Meditation	5	mins.
10.	Savasana	5	,,

3rd Week

1.	Complete Breath	6	times
2.	Cleansing Breath	3	,,
3.	Kumbhaka (p. 71), 8 beats	3	,,
4.	Uddiana Bandha (p. 82)	3	,,
5.	Yoga Mudra (p. 79)	3	,,
6.	Pashimottana (p. 81)	2	,,
7.	Viparita-Karani (p. 91)	2	,,
8.	Halasana (p. 93)	2	,,
9.	Meditation	5	mins.
10.	Savasana	5	,,

4th Week

1.	Complete Breath sitting	6	times
2.	Kapalabhati (p. 72)	3	,,
3.	Bramari (p. 74)	3	,,
4.	Vakrasana (p. 81)	3	,,
5.	Sarvangasana (p. 88)	2	,,
6.	Uddiana Bandha (p. 82)	3	,,
7.	Bhujangasana (p. 84)	3	,,
8.	Yoga Mudra (p. 79)	3	,,
9.	Meditation	5	mins.
10.	Savasana	5	,,

5th Week

1.	Complete Breath (sitting)	6	times
2.	"Ha" Respiration (standing) (p. 74)	2	,,
3.	"Ha" Respiration (sitting)	2	,,
4.	Ardha-Matsyendrasana or Vakrasana (p. 80)	2	,,
5.	Yoga Mudra (p. 79)	3	,,
6.	Bhujangasana (p. 84)	3	,,
7.	Dhanurasana (p. 86)	2	,,
8.	Viparita-Karani (p. 91)	2	,,
9.	Meditation	7	mins.
10.	Savasana	5	,,

6th Week

1.	Complete Breath sitting	6	times
2.	Nerve-strengthening Breath (p. 73)	3	,,
3.	Bhastrika (p. 72)	2	,,
4.	Uddiana Bandha sitting (p. 82)	3	,,
5.	Yoga Mudra (p. 79)	3	,,
6.	Ardha-Matsyendrasana (p. 80)	3	,,
7.	Trikonasana (p. 84)	3	,,
8.	Viparita-Karani (p. 91)	2	,,
9.	Meditation	7	mins.
10.	Savasana	7	,,

7th Week

1.	Complete Breath sitting	6	times
2.	Kapalabhati (p. 72)	3	,,
3.	Cleansing Breath	3	,,
4.	Uddiana Bandha (p. 82)	3	,,
5.	Yoga Mudra (p. 79)	3	,,
6.	Bhujangasana (p. 84)	3	,,
7.	Vakrasana (p. 81)	3	,,
8.	Dhanurasana (p. 86)	2	,,
9.	Meditation	10	mins.
10.	Savasana	10	,,

8th Week

1.	Complete Breath sitting	6 times
2.	Bhastrika (p. 72)	3 ,,
3.	Uddjai sitting (p. 71)	3 ,,
4.	Vakrasana (p. 81)	2 ,,
5.	Pashimottana (p. 81)	2 ,,
6.	Halasana (p. 93)	2 ,,
7.	Salabhasana (p. 86)	2 ,,
8.	Sirshasana or Viparita-Karani (p. 92)	2 ,,
9.	Meditation	10 mins.
10.	Savasana	10 ,,

9th Week

1.	Complete Breath sitting	6 times
2.	Cleansing Breath	3 ,,
3.	Kumbhaka (p. 71), 8-10 beats	2 ,,
4.	Yoga Mudra (p. 79)	3 ,,
5.	Sarvangasana (p. 88)	3 ,,
6.	Uddiana-Bandha standing (p. 82)	3 ,,
7.	Trikonasana (p. 84)	3 ,,
8.	Bhujangasana (p. 84)	3 ,,
9.	Meditation	10 mins.
10.	Savasana	10 ,,

10th Week

1.	Complete Breath	6 times
2.	Bhastrika (p. 72)	3 ,,
3.	Kapalabhati (p. 72)	3 ,,
4.	Vakrasana (p. 81)	3 ,,
5.	Yoga Mudra (p. 79)	3 ,,
6.	Uddiana Bandha (p. 82)	3 ,,
7.	Sirshasana (p. 92)	2 ,,
8.	Salabhasana (p. 86)	2 ,,
9.	Meditation	10 mins.
10.	Savasana	10 ,,

11*th Week*

1.	Complete Breath sitting	6 times
2.	"Ha" Respiration sitting (p. 74)	3 ,,
3.	Uddjai (p. 71)	2 ,,
4.	Trikonasana (p. 84)	3 ,,
5.	Dhanurasana (p. 86)	2 ,,
6.	Pashimottana (p. 81)	3 ,,
7.	Mayurasana (p. 88)	2 ,,
8.	Halasana (p. 93)	2 ,,
9.	Meditation	10 mins.
10.	Savasana	10 ,,

12*th Week*

1.	Complete Breath sitting	6 times
2.	Nerve-strengthening Breath (p. 73)	3 ,,
3.	Bramari (p. 74)	3 ,,
4.	Yoga Mudra (p. 79)	3 ,,
5.	Vakrasana (p. 81)	3 ,,
6.	Ardha-Salabhasana (p. 86)	3 ,,
7.	Bhujangasana (p. 84)	3 ,,
8.	Sirshasana (p. 92)	3 ,,
9.	Meditation	10 mins.
10.	Savasana	10 ,,

13*th Week*

1.	Complete Breath sitting	6 times
2.	Kapalabhati (p. 72)	3 ,,
3.	Uddjai (p. 71)	3 ,,
4.	Dhanurasana (p. 86)	3 ,,
5.	Uddiana, sitting or Nauli (p. 83)	3 ,,
6.	Supta-Vajrasana (p. 79)	3 ,,
7.	Sarvangasana (p. 88)	3 ,,
8.	Yoga Mudra (p. 79)	3 ,,
9.	Meditation	10 mins.
10.	Savasana	10 ,,

14th Week

1.	Complete Breath sitting	6	times
2.	Cleansing Breath	3	,,
3.	Bhastrika (p. 72)	3	,,
4.	Ardha-Matsyendrasana (p. 80)	3	,,
5.	Bhujangasana (p. 84)	4	,,
6.	Halasana (p. 93)	3	,,
7.	Salabhasana (p. 86)	3	,,
8.	Sarvangasana (p. 88)	3	,,
9.	Meditation	10	mins.
10.	Savasana	10	,,

The schedule has been arranged in such a manner that from fifteen minutes to half an hour should be sufficient for one practice-session. From the variety given, you will gradually come to select the exercises which suit you best and therefore allow you to make the most rapid progress. Once you have found these Asanas, you should adhere to them and make them your own. Remember always that the Hatha-Yoga exercises are not an end in themselves, but only a means to an end. The following chapters treat this end.

Chapter 17

KARMA-YOGA

AS we have repeated more than once, Hatha-Yoga is but a preparation and is often practised without any admixture of religious or even only philosophical considerations. The exercises which we have described have as their purpose the conscious control of physical and mental activities which ordinarily are not subject to such control. The goal is to teach us to perceive directly what is going on within us, in our inner physical and mental world and to direct these activities in a conscious and voluntary manner.

But this is yet only preparation. All Yoga is intensification of consciousness and of an evolution, of which Hatha-Yoga is only the preparatory stage. There are several paths or methods by which the goal may be reached. One of these is Karma-Yoga. It is, in reality, more a collection of ethical and moral precepts for those who live "in the world", than a system. This is so because, according to Indian thought, no one has the right to devote himself exclusively to the development of his inner self until he has paid his tribute to life. The Hindu knows four distinct periods of life: To his eighteenth year, man should be a student; to his fortieth year he is a griheshu or householder; after that he is allowed to abandon "life in the world" and to consecrate himself entirely to mental and spiritual development. If, in the course of this period, he feels himself called to the highest development, he may become a Sanyasin, leaving all earthly cares behind him, taking to the road, clad in the orange coloured gown of the beggar-monk, living on alms.

The much criticized Indian caste-system divides men roughly into those who follow a spiritual life from the start (Brahman), warriors (Kshatriya), and the doers, the followers of practical life, merchants and peasants (Vaishias). It is a division of society similar to that in clergy, nobility and bourgeoisie of the middle-ages in Europe.

Karma means action and Karma-Yoga takes action as the way to salvation. The ideal here is the active life as praised by the Bhagavad Gita, the most beautiful and deepest of Indian holy books.

> "*Action alone concerns you, never its fruit,*
> *Stability in success or failure, this balance is called*
> *Yoga.*"

The two privileged castes, Brahman and Kshatriya are highly esteemed in India because they are (or should be) ready to pay for their privileges with special sacrifices. If the warrior must be ready to give up his life at any time, the Brahman is bound by any number of rules and precepts, apt to develop a purely spiritual type of man. The Hindus knew early, to what extent a certain diet will influence mental attitude. Even the attitude, while eating, is prescribed. For the Brahman, the taking of food is a holy rite. Only "innocent" food is permitted.

Karma-Yoga praises action (Karman), without attachment to the fruit of action. The following legend shows how this is to be understood.

A king came to a Yogi living in solitude to learn about Karma-Yoga. They sat together under a tree and the Yogi began to recite the verses of the holy scriptures. High up in the tree two birds had built their nest. As darkness began to fall and the two men had not finished their talk, the male bird said to his female companion: "We have guests and I must see to it that they are made comfortable. As it is getting cold I shall gather some wood and start a fire." Thus speaking it flew off and gathered some dry twigs which it threw in front of the two men. Then he fetched a burning twig from a nearby wood fire and threw it upon the dry twigs. Soon a bright fire flared up and king and Yogi gratefully warmed their hands on it. The two birds were glad to see their hosts content, but after a little while the male bird said to his wife: "The men must be hungry. Let's see if we can't get them something to eat." "Alas, we have nothing fit for them to eat," said the female, "but we cannot let them go hungry." The male said: "It is our duty as hosts to feed them. If there really isn't anything else, then I shall sacrifice myself." Thus saying, the bird threw himself into the fire. The female, however, said to herself: "How can two big men possibly eat their fill on such a little bird? I shall follow my husband's example and sacrifice myself also." And she too threw herself into the flames.

The two men below understood too late what the birds were trying to do and could not save them. The Yogi rose and said to the king: "Now I do not have to tell you anything further regarding Karma-Yoga, O king. An example is worth more than all the words in all the books. Whosoever does his duty in such a way that he is willing to give up even his own life to it, he is a true Karma-Yogi."

Karma-Yoga glorifies action and for this reason, is very close to the occidental mind. A Karma-Yogi is not required to believe anything or in any kind of dogma. He follows no other idea than to work for work's sake. In this respect, the teaching of the Bhagavad Gita closely resembles that of Buddha who was adverse to any kind of metaphysical speculation, repeating over and over: "Be good and do good."

The principal rules of Karma-Yoga are contained in the two ordinances of *Yama* and *Niyama*. Yama is concerned with conduct towards others, not killing, not stealing, truthfulness, disinterestedness, these are its prescriptions. "Six enemies in us we must fight," it says, "greed, anger, non-discrimination, lust, pride and jealousy." These are the passions which incite us to the above named sins of killing, stealing, lying etc. They are all equally reprehensible, whether they are done, caused or merely tolerated. Since they are deeply rooted in human nature, they are hard to overcome. Good will alone is not sufficient. An act of the will, in regard to our mental world, usually gives rise to a thought the exact opposite to the one desired. Repression through an act of the will, of the thought of lust, for example, stimulates lust. It is not possible to overcome the enemy in this manner. If, however, we concentrate on the idea of purity and sacrifice, the new idea will usually prevail. The right procedure, therefore, is to replace a wrong thought such as anger, jealousy, lust etc. by a new and contrary idea and to hold on to it until the first impulse has been overcome.

It is also possible to philosophise about one's faults and to analyze their sources. One can ask, for instance, "Why should I not steal? It would be very nice if I had that piece of bread. I am hungry and the other fellow surely does not need it as much as I do." Why not? A Christian will say: Because it is a sin. The Hindu says: Because it is an error, born of ignorance. You think you are doing yourself a favour; in reality, you only hurt yourself. The stolen food will poison you.

This is a typical Indian idea and it is based on the Hindu philosophy of food. In terms of occidental medical science, the idea would appear in this way: A thief has a bad conscience. We know that fear causes certain changes in metabolism. We also know that the symptoms of such emotions are brought about with the collaboration of certain hormonal substances which, in the long run, can adversely affect the organism. This is the material side of the question. And the spiritual side? A theft, for instance, is always an intrusion of egotism into a foreign sphere of the will. Our attachment to material things is a result of egotistical activity. A man who wishes to tread the path of spiritual evolution will not take on new fetters ... In this way, all "enemies" and all "sins" are analyzed in meditation and overcome.

The rules of *Niyama*, on the other hand, are concerned with our conduct in regard to ourselves. They are outer and inner cleanliness, contentment, chastity, study and devotion. A first sign that we have achieved a certain degree of inner cleanliness is contentment. It is a purely Christian superstition that a religious person should have something of the mien and bearing of an undertaker. Quite the contrary is true. A really pious person is always joyous and content. The rule of chastity is not a rule of asceticism; it is merely significant of moderation. This is, incidentally, the fundamental note of Yoga: Harmony, Moderation.

Hindu literature, and especially the Gita, is full of references to the active life, without attachment to the fruits of action. There is, for instance, the story of Narada, the holy man who passed his days in praising God in prayer. Vishnu was very pleased with his zeal, but at the same time he wanted to point out to him the weaker side of his conduct and so he said to him: "Go to the first house of the next village. There you will find a man even more pious than you." Narada immediately set out to find so holy a man. But what he found was only a peasant who told him that he called upon the name of God once in the morning before going to work and once in the evening before going to bed. Narada returned to Vishnu and reproachfully remarked: "I cannot see much piousness in that man. Twice a day he calls upon Thy exalted name and apart from that attends to his worldly affairs." Thereupon Vishnu bade him take a pail of water and carry it through the village without spilling a drop. Narada did as he was told and on his return proudly exhibited the full pail from which not a drop had been spilled. Vishnu, however, asked him: "And how many times in carrying the pail did you call upon my name?" "Not once," Narada had to admit, "I was too busy watching the pail." And so Vishnu said to him: "During your small task you have not given me a single thought. How much more pious is the peasant who, with his hard day-long work finds time to call upon me twice."

Men work for the most varied reasons. But we should learn to work without any special motive and without regard for the fruits of work. One works for glory, another for money, yet another for power. Many hope that their actions will find their reward in heaven. But who works selflessly? Perhaps an artist who works for his art, whether recognized or not, or a scientist who only lives in and for his research, sometimes at the risk of his life. Such men are the real "elite" of humanity.

The Hindu ideal is not an ascetic ideal. In opposition to Christianity, Hindu thought is of the opinion that wealth is not necessarily a curse. What matters is whether the rich man is at every moment ready to abandon his riches, if necessary, the point being that no man should attach himself to his earthly possessions, which is the secret of real liberty. A beggar possessing only a few rags can be more attached than a wealthy prince like Buddha, who from one day to the next abandoned kingdom, wealth and family as soon as he recognized that this was necessary for his inner liberty. "He who acts in dedicating all his actions to the Eternal One, abandoning all attachment, is not troubled by sin, the same as a lotus leaf is not touched by the water." Thus the Karma-Yogi can go through life and enjoy life; he can enjoy it, but shall not attach himself to it. Nothing is really yours except your good works. He who learns to abandon his egotistical desires develops immense power. To deny oneself is often a more heroic deed than a victory on the battle-field of war or of sport.

On the other hand, the Hindu despises him who makes duty a mania. Many of us are only slaves of duty. Duty, and no time to eat in peace, no time to enjoy nature, no time to take stock of ourselves, no time to live. We are foolish to let duty rob us of our inner freedom. The mechanism of the world is a dangerous machine; once we are in its clutches, we are in danger of being crushed by it.

Indian thought refers here, as always, to the law of Sattwa, the law of the pendulum which is everywhere characteristic of life. Inspiration is followed by expiration, work by play, extraversion by introversion. Every faithful Hindu begins and closes his day with meditation; what he has expended in the extravert activity of the day he takes back again in the introversion of meditation. To be stable, a tower, a skyscraper needs a deep foundation. Our generation is superficial and always in danger of losing its balance. Modern psychiatry knows this and in the analytical technique leads the mentally ill back into the past. Former generations, grounded in faith and mystical introversion had no need of this aid. A man who combines the two poles in himself through religion or Yoga remains tranquilly serene in the midst of the turbulence of modern life as though he lived in solitude.

With our work we help only ourselves. It is a gathering of experiences. Those who believe that we work in order to help improve the world, to "make the world a better place to live in" etc., are in error. The world cannot be helped. The same needs and cares it had a thousand years ago it has today and will still have a thousand years from now. All we do, in this respect, is to move the problems from one place to another, that is all. When the waves rise in one place, they fall in another. And as with waves, so with fortune and misfortune, divided in the world, but their sum is always in balance.

> "*What do you want to do with the world?*
> *It is made.*
> *The Lord of Creation has thought of everything.*"

It has been said that the world resembles a spiral which we continually seek to straighten out. But as soon as we let go at one end, the spiral forms again. An Indian legend tells of a man who was tired of his daily work. He called upon a magician and asked him for a Djinn, a demon, who could do his work for him. The magician warned him that a Djinn was a powerful spirit who needs work all the time. "If you cannot keep him busy at all times he will devour you." The man laughed and said: "Please do not worry about that; I have plenty of work for the strongest Djinn!" And so the magician gave him a Mantram, an incantation which would get him a Djinn. The man did as he was told and behold, a towering powerful spirit stood before him and asked in a resounding voice: "What do you want from me?" At first the man was a little scared, but took heart and ordered: "Build me a palace at once!"—"Here it is."—"Cut down yon forest!"—"It is done."—"Bring me gold!"—"Here it is." "Build me a city!"—"There it stands." Every wish was fulfilled almost before the man had time to express it. In despair, he ran to the magician and begged him on his knees to help him once more. "I do not know what to order anymore and the Djinn threatens to devour me." The magician smiled and said: "In truth you scarcely deserve a better fate, but nevertheless I shall help you once more. See the dog over there, the one with the curly tail? Go cut it off and tell the Djinn to straighten it out. He will be busy with the job as long as the world lasts." The man did as he was told and the Djinn is still busy with his task. Every time he lets go, the tail curls again. Every generation tries to change and reform the world, but it remains as inadequate as ever.

When once we have recognized that our actions serve only the gathering of experiences and thus our own salvation, we realize how important it is consciously to live every day of our life. To live consciously is to live in the present. Many people in their thoughts are constantly a day, a week, a year ahead. Do they really know if they will still be alive next year? In our dreaming about the future we are apt to miss the experiences which the present offers us for our edification. Let the day take care of the day.

Living consciously, learning from life, we come close to the metaphysical interpretation of our actions, characteristic of Indian thought, close to the idea of Karma, of the consequences of our actions, not only of the actions of our present life, but also of former lives.

Western thought says: "By their fruits shall you know them." Eastern wisdom replies: "All created beings are owners of their works, heirs of their works, children and slaves of their works." Karma, Law of Consequence. To escape Karma is possible only if we change what we are to what we would be. Everything that happened to us today is conditioned by previous actions and desires. Unconditioned, however, is our inner attitude towards our self-made destiny, whether we say yes or no to it, whether we learn from it or deny it. Unconditioned also is the determination to new aspiration, to new endeavour which will lead us further on the path of liberation.

Chapter 18

BHAKTI-YOGA—THE YOGA OF LOVE

THERE are two possibilities in us to comprehend the world, the possibility of feeling and the possibility of reasoning. The way to a comprehension of the world through feeling is *Bhakti-Yoga*, while the way through conscious reasoning is *Jnana-Yoga*. One addresses itself to the emotions and the subconscious forces, the other to reason, using consciousness as a means to salvation. The pair of opposites can be compared with the contrast existing between mysticism and scholasticism which characterizes the early development of Christianity. Bhakti-Yoga would correspond to mysticism, Jnana-Yoga to scholasticism. Such differentiations, of course, have always something artificial about them, because at a certain degree of development, the two opposites, reason and feeling blend together in something more perfect. Then the heart thinks, the brain feels, there is inspiration and intuition.

It is said that the way of feeling, Bhakti-Yoga, is easier, love demanding no effort. All is possible to love. A mother, in daily life perhaps afraid of a mouse, will snatch her baby from the clutches of a tiger to save the life of her child. Love is the great ennobling impulse of our life. All Christians know St Paul's hymn to love: "... love suffers long, and is kind; love envies not; love vaunts not itself, is not puffed up, does not behave itself unseemly, seeks not her own ..." Love is the force which cements the universe.

Hindus have a number of names for the many shadings of love. But when the great Yogi Vivekanada sings his hymn to love he uses only one name: God. In the source of love, all its various forms and manifestations have their origin, even animal love, even the forces of attraction within matter. To Vivekanada, even the passionate desire that may lead to crime is a manifestation of love, "Whichever it may be—

divine, angelic, rational, animal or instinctive," says Saint Hierotheus, "through love we hear and understand the force which establishes and maintains harmony between beings." In following the different rivers back to their source, we recognize that there is an original source which creates unity and harmony between all things, from the highest to the lowest creature. In the same spirit Jesus (St Luke 7-47) declares: "Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her: "Thy sins are forgiven."

Love is the lever used by God to lift us out of our egotism. In love, every sacrifice seems easy, even that of our own egotistical desires. For this reason Bhakti-Yoga does not teach: "Resign thyself", but simply: "Love!" Love with all your heart and resignation will follow by itself. But all that we may love on earth: beauty, virtue, happiness, is only a pale reflection of the glory of God. Thus, love of Him should be far more ardent than the love of earthly things.

There is in the Veda a verse which means: "The husband loves not his wife, but only the Atman (God) in her." He believes to love the wife; but soon he sees that it was only his ideal which he projected on her and loved in her. Our final ideal is God. Why therefore love the second-rate? The more we love Him, the better we will understand Him.

It is difficult, however, to love an abstract notion. Bhakti-Yoga says: "There are two forces in you which can carry you up to God: Feeling and Reason, representation and idea. But the representation will prove more powerful than the mere idea."

As we have seen in Hatha-Yoga, it is possible to influence bodily functions through the imagination. When we lift our arm, for instance, we do not do so on the strength of a conscious, logical process of thinking, consciously sending the impulse of the will from the brain to the nerves and from there to the muscles. No, it is done in a flash by means of our imagination. This power of the imagination affecting our subconscious mind is used by Bhakti-Yoga. The discrim-

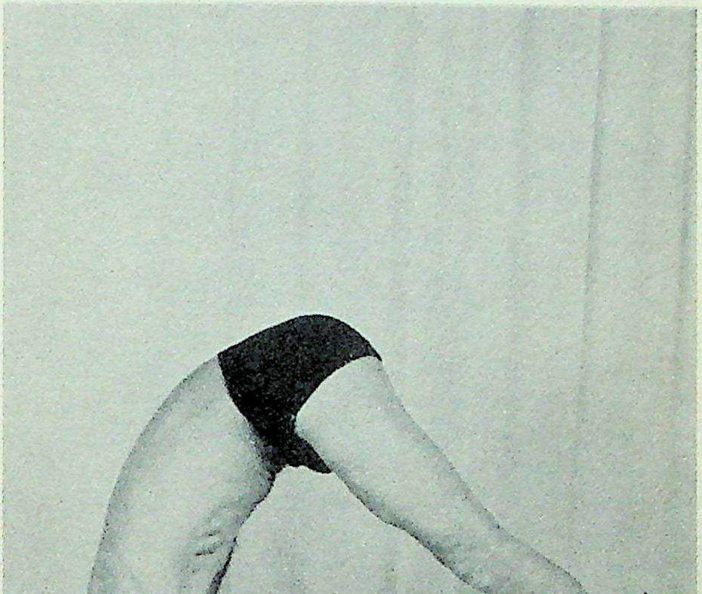


FIG. 15 (a)—SIRSHASANA

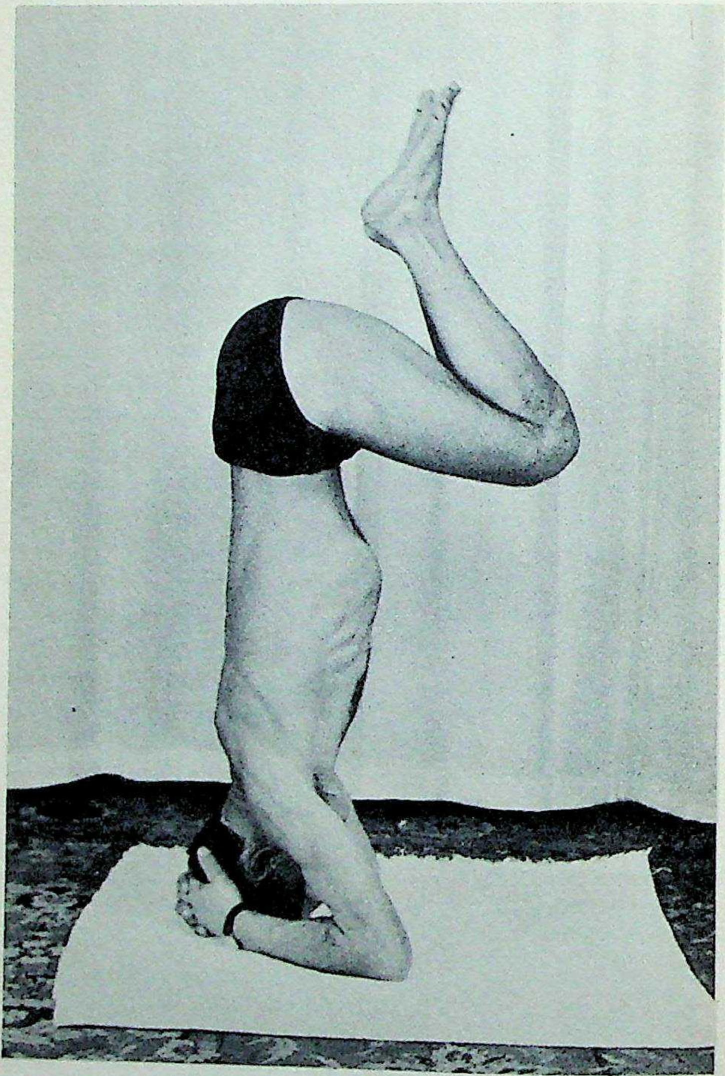


FIG. 15 (b)—SIRSHASANA

inative factor of reason is largely eliminated in favour of imagination and love.

The Occident has made its no doubt phenomenal conquest of the realm of matter under the sign of reason, although imagination has played its part in the formulation of the most revolutionary ideas such as relativity etc. There are many signs which portend a change of attitude and the reign of pure materialism is surely at an end. All artistic creation is a child of phantasy, of "temporary insanity". In the last analysis, all is imagination, idea, mind. As C. G. Jung says: "It is a matter of indifference what the world thinks of religious experience; he who possesses it has a treasure, the source of life, intelligence and beauty, lending the world and humanity a new sense."

Images existed before abstractions. This is why images affect deeper regions of the soul than mere abstractions. Such images are not to be confused with illusions. Modern psychology recognizes the reality of the soul-experience. A psychic experience is not necessarily a hallucination just because we do not share in it. To term it as such would be as erroneous as when a blind man would call the perceptions of a seeing man mere illusion.

All religions are full of images and symbols. Mere study will not disclose their deep sense, we must live them. A tree is best known by its fruit, and thus living can only be an individual experience. Men differ from each other especially by the quality of their imagination. Even the notions regarding our perceptions of colour, sounds, odours differ widely from man to man. "*De gustibus non est disputandum.*" There is no discussing of tastes. Individual notions regarding metaphysical realities are of necessity even more differentiated.

For these reasons Bhakti-Yoga leaves to each of us the choice of the image of God most comfortable to his inner nature. Indian mythology is infinitely rich in such images. What is important is that the image chosen contains the magic forces apt to affect to a higher degree the emotions of the faithful. It is recommended that the God-seeker keep his image of God to himself and do not speak about it to anyone. It should be guarded like a tender plant until it has grown strong. He who has attained knowledge can then dispense with the image. Leaders of psychology today recognize that religious images can be a wall, a safeguard against irruptions of the unconscious.

The goal of Bhakti-Yoga consists of an intensification of the emotional forces to such a degree that the faithful is raised step by step, until love of God has grown to perfect and constant concentration on Him, to absorption in Him. It is not sufficient to this end to go to church once a week or to think of God once or twice a day. The goal of Union with the Divine Ground can only be reached when our consciousness is constantly filled with the thought of God. "Love Him, love Him immeasurably, exhaust the sources of your emotion, then one day, you will recognize that Love, the Lover and the Loved One are One." The Bhakti who has reached the goal is not bound to church or sect. These are only ways to God, but they are not God themselves. Said Ramakrishna: "It is as with water, you can draw it in all kinds of jugs, of all kinds of forms; but the water is always the same."

The perfect Bhakti is liberated from desire and egotism. In him shines the light of love. Love of God becomes love of the world and of all its creatures. The "love thy neighbour as thyself" is for him a matter of course, since in his neighbour he recognizes himself. The whole world, to him, is the expression, in infinite language of the Infinite.

Chapter 19

JNANA-YOGA—THE YOGA OF DISCRIMINATION

THERE is yet another path to God, the path of discrimination, the path of understanding, of intellect, of reasoning. It is a path particularly familiar to the Occidental mind, being the path of the natural sciences. And these natural sciences today have reached a limit beyond which our material knowledge is threatened with annihilation. Science has discovered that in the infinitely big as in the infinitely small the heretofore irrefutable law of causation, which says that every event or phenomenon results from an adequate antecedent cause, is no longer valid. Here lies the real reason for the deep distress of our times, the reason why philosophy and the arts carry the seal of decay.

Jnana-Yoga turns from the consideration of the exterior world to that of the world within us. The natural scientist would discover what moves matter; Jnana-Yoga seeks the secret of what moves *us*, the secret of what we call the soul.

> *"The wise sees in himself the Atman,*
> *Gazing inward, seeking what ıs eternal."*

It is, in a way, the "know thyself" of the inscription at Delphi with which Jnana-Yoga is concerned. But it is not, as often in Occidental philosophy, a question of knowing *what* we are, but rather a question of learning how to be *who* we are.

The Vedanta praises the human intellect as one of the greatest gifts of God. Like imagination, it is a path to Him. But with the intellect alone we are as unable to reach God as with the emotions alone. For the Hindu this is no reason to despise the intellect.To Hindu thought, a godless man is almost to be preferred to one not making use of his reasoning powers.

Where Bhakti-Yoga has followed the path of affirmation, of synthesis, so Jnana-Yoga follows the path of negation, of analysis. All the tools of our consciousness are examined one by one, and one by one it is recognized: I am not this, nor that. And thus, at last we arrive at the core of our being, recognizing it as the "I".

The path of discriminative understanding is much more difficult than the path of Love. It lacks the bridges of imagination. It is a rocky path along an abyss. But it is just the same closer to our Western mode of thinking than any of the other Yogas. Nevertheless it is almost as difficult to sum up the teachings of Jnana-Yoga as to sum up the results of all the Western systems of philosophy.

According to Hindu philosophy, the world of our perceptions is not the same as the world of reality. In order to grasp the "real" reality we must, therefore, first examine the manner in which we arrive at our perceptions. We must examine our five senses by means of which the exterior impressions are transmitted to us. For the Hindu, these senses, touch, hearing, sight, taste and smell are contrasted by five acting senses, the functions of which are breathing, evacuating, digesting etc. ... But who is the "hearer of the hearing, the seer of the seeing"? According to Eastern thought, we become conscious of the sense impressions through a centre called *Cittam*, what we call the intellect. This Cittam has three aspects, the ramifications of which it would be too complicated to follow here. The idea is of an instrument which receives, projects and registers at the same time. The following example will illustrate the functioning of this instrument.

You meet a tiger and you run. The two,—seeing, running, follow so rapidly one upon the other, that they seem one and we are not aware at all that the perception of the tiger is followed by the projection: "Out there is an animal" followed by the registration: "It is a tiger and a tiger is a dangerous animal" whereupon follows the decision to run. The Cittam, the intellect, has three aspects and reacts in different ways. A Hindu would put it this way: As a woman can be a wife, mother and daughter at the same time, depending upon the viewpoint, so the Cittam can be a perception, projection and registration, depending on how it reacts. Another example: We hear the ticking of a clock. The ear receives the sound-waves and transmits the stimulus to the centre of perception in the brain, called Indriya by the Indians. This centre receives the stimulus and presents it to the Cittam. In the Cittam, or intellect, the perception is registered: "I hear a noise." In another part of the intellect, called Manas, this is organized in space and time: "I hear a ticking." Finally in yet another part, the Buddhi, where lies the faculty of remembering and classifying, the conclusion is drawn: "It is a clock which ticks."

Modern science is not sure as to whether an animal can remember consciously and draw conclusions. For the Indians, it possesses this faculty at least in a latent degree. The elephant is said to have it. But even then animals lack the faculty of thinking in opposites and of forming abstract notions. And in this faculty lies the fundamental difference between man and animal.

The first contrast that appears in the human mind or consciousness is that between the "I" and the "non-I". A dog, in the above example, would say: "Toto hears ticking", but not "I hear ticking." The acquisition of the I-consciousness in man is probably of comparatively recent origin. Little children do not possess it and have to learn it. Only then the originally one splits in two, into the opposites of I and not-I, in things conscious and unconscious. Here also begins the human development in the direction of the divine. Here lies the origin of the symbol of the fruits from the tree of knowledge and exile from paradise. The I-consciousness is called Ahamkara by the Indians and it is the motor which sets in motion our conscious will. To Indian wisdom this will is threefold, in accordance with the division body, soul, spirit: Body, the will to live; Soul, the I-will, the conscious will; Spirit, the cosmic, free will.

It is our conscious will which is, in the last analysis, responsible for our destiny. One of the Upanishads (literally:

secret teaching, the most mysterious part of the Vedanta) says: "Man is made entirely of desire. As is his desire, so is his will; as is his will, so is his action (Karma). And as his action, so will he fare."

It is therefore on our conscious will that we must work if we wish to change our destiny. If we give free rein to our bodily will to live, our libido, as the psycho-analyst would call it, it will aim at the satisfaction of desire. This satisfaction is achieved mostly at the expense of others. This is contrary to the cosmic will. Our actions in the direction of the satisfaction of our desires create a reaction on the part of the cosmic will in the form of a prevention of our desires. Here lies the cause of all sorrow. All sorrow is prevented wish-fulfillment. We shall suffer as long as we have not learned that our ego cannot be satisfied at the expense of other egos. The egotistic will is not free to do as it pleases. Real freedom lies beyond. When we finally grasp this fact we can pray: "thy will be done".

The road to freedom, the road to free action outside the chain of cause and effect is, paradoxically, an abstention from action, a negative will, the negation of our Ahamkara, the egotistical reaction in us. Every action which is contrary to our ego, every action of love is not bound to the chain of cause and effect and sets us free. In asceticism we find the highest expression of the negation of the egotistical will.

This "rendering conscious" of our ego-will, this mastery, this overcoming alone gives us the possibility of changing our character and thereby changing our destiny. In this change lies possibly our evolution towards a higher state in nature. The heightening of our consciousness through mental analysis is the way to liberation of Jnana-Yoga.

We sometimes say in retrospect: "I did not mean to do this," and thereby condemn an action of ours performed on impulse. The force which condemns our action is our conscience. Our conscience looks upon us as from a distance. It lies between existence and the real, inner self. Here man has reached the world of abstract ideas. Here is freedom. But the conscience is not yet "the seer of seeing, the hearer of hearing." Eternally unchanged and unchangeable, the Seer stands behind, or above the psychic organism, called lingam, or soul and of which the conscience is only the highest part. The Self, however, is the Seer and Hearer, the Spectator of Life. Indians call this nucleus of being the Atman, the Self. It reflects the impressions of the soul, but is not affected by them. For the Self all things are one. This ultimate entity of man is not touched by opposites; these are felt only by the egotistical will, the small I. The Atman is real and eternal. And thus, according to the path of Jnana, when we have finally realized who it is that hears, that feels, that asks etc., then we are free from the illusion that the impressions of our senses have any reality whatsoever. According to this view, the knowledge we acquire by means of our brain is only a transitory stage, a stepping-stone to true knowledge which lies in the Atman, the "knower of knowledge". The knower is the Atman, the world of outer impressions is Maya, illusion. The Atman, the Self, the Divine Ground of Being is pure spirit and has no part of matter, or Maya.

The same conclusion has been drawn by Christian mystics and by the founder of Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy. This shows that the great religious truths are everywhere closely related, that in all races and at all times the reality of man is the same.

And thus finally the path of Jnana-Yoga arrives at the goal of Oneness. The Atman, the Self is God, the ultimate reality. He is one and undivided in every man. All creation is only a manifestation, a form of Brahman, a quality, an attribute of God, nothing else. *Only as long as we believe to be of this world can the world have power over us.* Once this error is recognized we are free. *We come out of freedom, are bound for a while and we return to freedom.* Freedom is not a place, however, but a condition. There is no place where there could be freedom, every place being bound to space and this subject to the laws of space. And that is why Jesus Christ says: "The Kingdom is in you".

Chapter 20

RAJA-YOGA—THE ROYAL PATH

RAMAKRISHNA, one of the great modern sages of India (1833-86) sums up Raja-Yoga as follows: "Raja-Yoga leads to the realization of the Absolute through concentration and meditation. It has eight steps. The first is *Yama*, which consists of non-injuring, truthfulness, non-covetousness, chastity, and the non-receiving of gifts. The second is *Niyama* which includes austerities, forbearance, contentment, faith in the Supreme Being, charity, study and self-surrender to the supreme will. The practice of various physical postures is comprised in *Asana*, the third step, while *Pranayama*, the art of breathing, constitutes the fourth. The fifth is *Pratyahara* and consists of making the mind introspective and one-pointed. Concentration or *Dharana* is the next. *Dhyana* or meditation is the seventh, and *Samadhi*, or the state of super-consciousness the eighth." This is a bare outline, of course.

Raja-Yoga is the Royal Path, the path of realization, for which all other Yogas were only a preparation. In a way, it combines the practices of all others.

In *Hatha-Yoga* we have endeavoured to eliminate the obstacles which our *body* could put in the way to realization; in *Karma-Yoga* we have purified our *actions*; in *Bhakti-Yoga* we have intensified our emotions and the power of *love* as levers to attain super-consciousness; in *Jnana-Yoga* we have analyzed our *mental mechanism* and have arrived at the conclusion that none of the instruments of our mind is, in itself, a sure support for real knowledge.

As can be seen in a consideration of the eight steps of *Raja-Yoga*, it is a discipline of the *mind* through self-analysis and self-control. Above all, as shown in Jnana-Yoga, it is the conscious will which must be disciplined. Our thinking and feeling must be strictly controlled. We must begin to learn that the essential things do not happen outside of us, but inside, in the world of our representations. This is, of course, no easy task for a brain used to register impressions coming from the outside world. The brain must now learn that our outer perceptions are only shadows. Paul Brunton reports how an Indian Yogi, questioned by him compared our thinking to an ox-cart in a dark passage under a mountain. Turn the cart around and it will take you back into the light. In a way, it is this turning-round of our way of thinking which is Raja-Yoga.

In order to accomplish this feat we must first learn to concentrate our thought. The importance of concentration is self-evident even to our Occidental way of thinking. None of the wonders of our technical civilization could have been achieved without the most intensive concentration of mind on the part of some scientist or other. Is it unreasonable to believe that the self-same power of concentration could penetrate also the secrets of the world within us?

In Indian philosophy, man is sometimes likened to a king who looks out upon the world from his carriage. The body is the carriage, the senses are the horses, the intellect is represented by the reins, reason by the coachman. The king who takes in the passing scene, passively, only seeing, perceiving, he is the Atman, our higher Self.

In Hatha-Yoga we have learned how to bring the unconscious activities of our body under the control of the conscious mind. We now must learn to govern our senses. The senses convey to us, in an uninterrupted chain, the impressions of the outside world, keeping our brain busy in absorbing and digesting these sense-impressions. Only in deep sleep does it rest.

But it happens that the senses remain insensible to outside impressions even during the waking state. When we are completely absorbed by an interesting book, for example, we hear and see nothing of what occurs around us. Or perhaps we see and hear, but do not react. It is therefore a question of attention whether we react or not. It should, therefore, be possible to withdraw our attention consciously, voluntarily from certain sense-impressions, or to concentrate attention on one of them to the exclusion of all others. This is the first of Raja-Yoga, called *Pratyahara*.

This is most speedily accomplished in exerting one of the senses to the utmost. We become all ear, for instance. We listen with all our might to our heartbeat. After some practice we shall be able to control our sense of hearing to such an extent that we can withdraw it at will and work tranquilly in the midst of bedlam. Newspapermen who work in the noisy city-room of a big newspaper practise Pratyahara without knowing it! In the same manner, we can educate the nose not to smell, the eyes not to see, yes, even to the extent of commanding the nerve-ends not to transmit a sensation such as pleasure or pain.

Once we have achieved such control we can go a step further and try to control not only the senses, but also our intellect, the Cittam, the thinking process. We generally assume that we do the thinking, while, as a matter of fact, something thinks in us. We do not know how the thoughts come to us. To stop the film which unrolls itself inside us is mightily difficult. This is why Indians compare the intellect to a monkey, always in senseless agitation. This agitation is the welling-up in our consciousness of memories and impressions that have been buried in the great storehouse of the unconscious mind. This is due to the fact that most of the time we live in a completely unconscious manner.

All we think, all we do leaves a trace, not unlike an odour which clings to our being and the sum total of which constitutes our character. What we are, what we would like to be is the consequence of the impressions on which we have dwelled in the past. To the Indian, it is clear that we ourselves have built our character in the course of many previous incarnations, and that it is in our power to remodel it in cultivating henceforth constructive thoughts and habits. But how can we master the unconscious sense-impressions, which in the long run constitute our character? The answer is that in order to deal with them, we must first learn to recognize them.

For the Indian, the Cittam, the intellect is a vibratory state; it vibrates in accordance with wave-length and frequency of the object it perceives. In a similar way, he also explains the association of ideas. A certain object, let us say a red flower excites a certain vibration; other perceptions arise in the memory, perceptions which once excited the same vibration in the intellect. Thus arises a chain of associations. The idea of Raja-Yoga now is to increase the vibratory capacity of the intellect in order to overcome its innate laziness.

We have said that it is the accumulation of unconscious memories and preconceived opinions which constitute our character. We can only change it by changing our thinking habits. We must swim against the stream and that is hard. All we have lived, all we have experienced we must experience once more in reverse; we must make it conscious in order to overcome it. The reader will be struck with the similarity of this method to the methods of psycho-analysis. It goes to show that Hindu wisdom knew about psychology and the unconscious mind thousands of years ago. There is an important difference, however. The psycho-analyst unravels the past experiences of his patient and, having led him through the maze of the accumulated and repressed memories, some of which may have caused mental havoc, lets it go at that and many a time a cure is effected, because the unconscious has been made conscious, the patient has understood what caused the disturbance and may not make the same mistakes again. Raja-Yoga follows the same method, but when it has unraveled the past, when it has made conscious what was unconscious, it bids us to return to the centre from which we have started; it bids us to return to God.

We can master the sense-impressions, our memories, conscious and unconscious in two ways. The first method is to make these memories conscious again. This is the method of psycho-analysis, as we have seen. We know how dangerous the unconscious memories can become; they are the roots of neuroses and psychoses.

A lovely Indian fable tells of a king to whom his subjects daily brought presents. These were carried to his treasure house. Among the people who thus offered their gifts there was a Yogi who every day presented the king with a beautiful fruit. The king did not estimate this offering any too highly, but accepted it nevertheless and with the other presents accumulated the fruit in his treasury. Now it happened that one day a child was with the king when the Yogi arrived to make his offering, a beautiful apple. The king, smilingly, gave the apple to the child, a little girl, who immediately began to eat it. All of a sudden she gave a cry of surprise: her teeth had struck on something hard. Carefully she took a few more bites and, lo and behold, she uncovered a glittering jewel, a wonderful sapphire. The king was struck with wonder and commanded his treasurer to see what had become of all the other fruit. It had all rotted away. Where it had been stored, there rose a glittering heap of precious jewels. The treasury is our unconscious mind.

But, alas, not all the impressions and memories that lie in that storehouse are jewels, although many of the impressions slumbering there are recognized at their real value only after we have made them conscious again. Into this storehouse we must, above all, bring some order, and then we must see that we do not, in the future, store in it anything without having first carefully examined it. We must learn to live attentively, consciously.

The film of which we have spoken before, the uninterrupted projection of the sense-impressions which constitutes our thinking process, obscures the pure vision of reality. If we were able to stop the ever running film-band for only a very little while, we would see all things in clear outline. We would learn again to think intuitively; we would learn again to think not with the brain, but with the pineal gland, by the ancients called the "eye of God". Here is how Webster defines the pineal gland: "Pineal gland or body; a small organ about the size of a pea, situated in the brain of vertebrates above the third ventricle. It is supposed to be a rudimentary organ of sense, presumably of sight and, as such, to be a vestige of a dorsal median eye found in some fossils and present, in an imperfect form, known as the pineal eye, in some existing animals." A rudimentary organ of sense. ... Descartes, the French philosopher, as recently as the seventeenth century thought it an "organ of the soul", while our so-called "modern" science sees in it merely a hormonal control organ. It is, nevertheless, probable that the phenomena of clairvoyance and telepathy, among others, are a function of this gland.

In Indian tradition, the pineal gland is a most important organ. The highest states of consciousness depend on it—intuition, beatitude and Godlikeness. All of the Yoga exercises, in the last analysis, have the purpose of eliminating the predominance of the brain and of self-consciousness and of attaining the cosmic consciousness through a reactivation of the pineal gland.

But what are the practical steps which lead to such control? In order to control, to dominate the unrolling of the film of consciousness the first step is to become aware of the fact of the "unrolling". We can only control what has become conscious. As a first aid to this process of making conscious the thinking and feeling of our organism, the Yoga student learns to re-examine and re-evaluate the events of the day, every night before going to sleep. He begins with the very last impression and unrolls one after the other back to the beginning. Thus: "I have extinguished the light ... before that I went to bed ... before that I cleaned my teeth ... before that I undressed ... before that I wound my watch ... and so through the events of the day. This is not as easy as it sounds. It is more than probable that you will go to sleep long before you have come to the end of your examination, but at least part of the "Samskara", the sense-impressions, have been made conscious and will not come to disturb your sleep in anxiety dreams.

This exercise has been likened to the practice of scales by a pianist. We thereby learn to dominate the impressions, instead of being dominated by them. We begin to be master in our own house. During this exercise we remember at will, and only through memory, through our past do we know who and what we are. He who remembers, knows himself through his former actions, judges himself in these actions and, looking back, realizes why certain things had to happen to him and not to another, what he could learn thereby, what new possibilities open up before him. Memory is multiplication of the one who remembers; he owns not only the present, but also the past; he has mastered a part of time.

It is thought that if we can extend our memory over the day, the week, the month, the year and the years back to our childhood to the threshold of birth, we can step across the threshold to remember the events of our former lives. Our human reason may not be able to comprehend this, but who could doubt that a personality of the spiritual purity of a Buddha did not lie when he affirmed that in this way he had become conscious of four of his former incarnations?

One thing is certain: In trying to recall to memory the events of a single day in all its detail, we realize what tremendous power of concentration would be needed in order to recall the events of a whole life, not to speak of former lives. But to seize clearly and sharply in consciousness only the events of the previous day will immeasurably refine and sharpen our powers of memory and consciousness. We gradually learn to understand the causalities, the why of the events in our life. We begin to realize that we are the makers of our destiny.

Meditation on the events of the past day also helps to awaken our unconscious memory and offers an answer to questions which we have been asking ourselves, to problems which have been torturing us; it is a sort of self-analysis.

As long as we have not learned to make conscious all of our sense impressions, or consciously to direct them, they will constantly reappear on the surface of the mind, like bubbles on a swamp, at the very moment we seek to quiet our intellect in meditation. We, therefore, must find yet another method to subjugate them. Buddha, whose teachings are a sort of combination Karma-Yoga, Raja-Yoga, recommends that we discipline the chaotic flux of impressions, that we categorically reject all undesirable ones the second they present themselves at the door of consciousness. This is not to be confused with repression. Repression is only a partly conscious act; we repress an idea through cowardice, through conventionality etc. ... When we consciously *reject* an idea, in the sense of Buddha's recommendation, we do so by a conscious moral decision. To "reject" is to be understood as to "replace". We replace the undesirable idea by a desirable one. The higher idea has a higher frequency, higher vibrations; in cultivating the higher idea, we gain power over the lower one. Buddha puts it in these words: "The same, O monks, as a mason with a fine wedge drives out, pushes out, beats out a bigger wedge, so a monk when he seizes upon an idea in connection with which base and unworthy considerations obtrude themselves, images of lust, of hate, of illusion, he shall replace them by other, worthy images." The student thus constantly keeps his unconscious mind under control and lifts the sense-impressions into the light of consciousness. This extension of the consciousness is the first phase of Raja-Yoga.

"With a clear conscience let us arm ourselves, clearly conscious in coming and going, clearly conscious in looking on and in looking away, clearly conscious in mounting and descending, clearly conscious in eating and in drinking, in chewing and in tasting, clearly conscious in eliminating, clearly conscious in standing and in walking, in sleeping and in waking, in speaking and in keeping silent, thus, O my monks, you should practise well."

The practice of visual representations of a high nature creates favourable vibrations, favourable states of consciousness. The same is true, according to Indian tradition, of the repetition of certain sentences and words. The Indian believes that in these words and phrases lies the experience of many thousands of years, of innumerable former incarnations of millions of men, creating again and again the atmosphere and the vibrations which they had when first used. It is not absolutely necessary to understand the meaning of the word or phrase; its sound alone will create the favourable frequency of vibration. The best known of these sacred syllables is OM, or AUM, the meditation on which is said to lead to salvation. Its perfection is due to the fact that it comprises all the consonants and vowels, all other words from alpha to omega. The sounding of the final M is considered most important. In the same way the Yogi meditates on the phrase: "*Om mani padme hum*", ("O jewel in the lotus blossom") as a Christian would meditate on the phrase: "God is love." or "the peace that passes all understanding". The sounding of the phrase is accompanied by meditation on its meaning. Since this murmur-mediation may easily lead to a sort of trance which has nothing in common with real liberation, it must be used with great care and discretion. The Yoga aphorisms of Patanjali* recommended in its stead a systematic practice of concentration, then of meditation, finally leading to contemplation. In this way, consciousness is not lulled to sleep.

Thus, after we have learned to discipline our senses, we have learned to control the sequence of our representations, trying to analyse our unconscious mind, rendering it conscious as far as it is possible.

After this stage, we have consciously created a representation and held it in our mind, excluding all other representations. This is what is called *concentration*.

When we now endeavour to state everything we know about the object held in our mind, when we oblige our thinking to turn around this object and to look at it from all sides, and when finally we go with our mind to the very centre of this object (med-itari, going to the middle), we call it *meditation*.

But still we are here and the object is there. Our mind is still in movement and says: "Here am I and what is there is not I." Should we succeed in extending our I to the object, i.e. not only to represent and comprehend the object, but also to feel it, then we get into *contemplation*. Then I and the object have become one.

And finally, should we succeed in overcoming our ego, in

---

* See p. 144

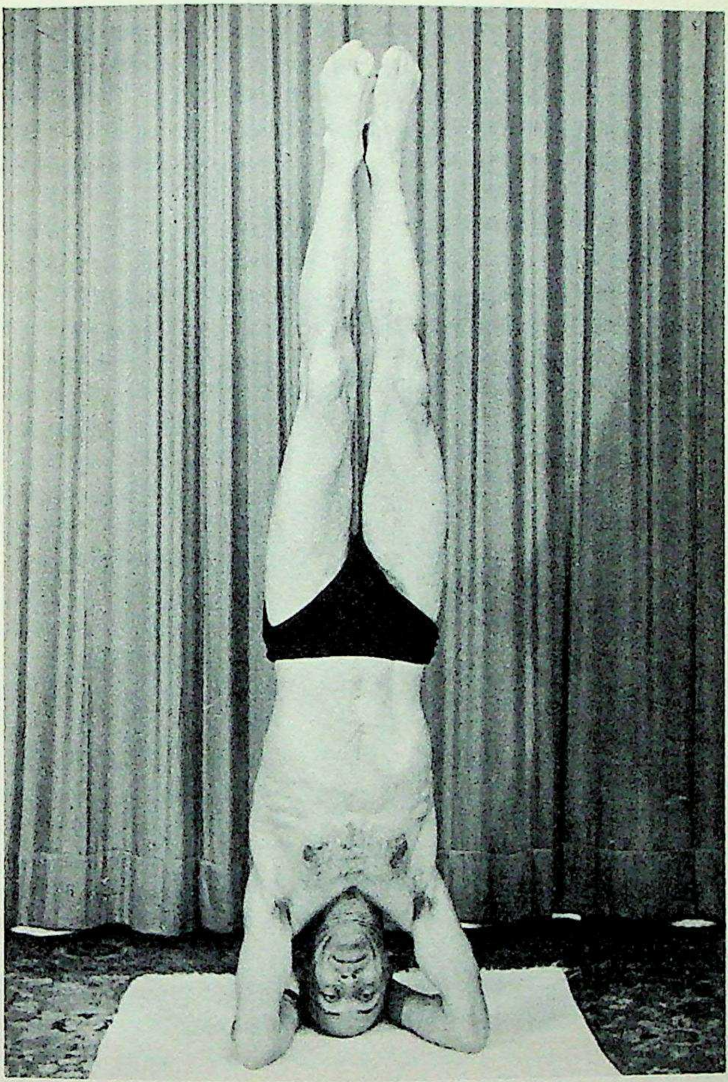


FIG. 15 (c)—SIRSHASANA

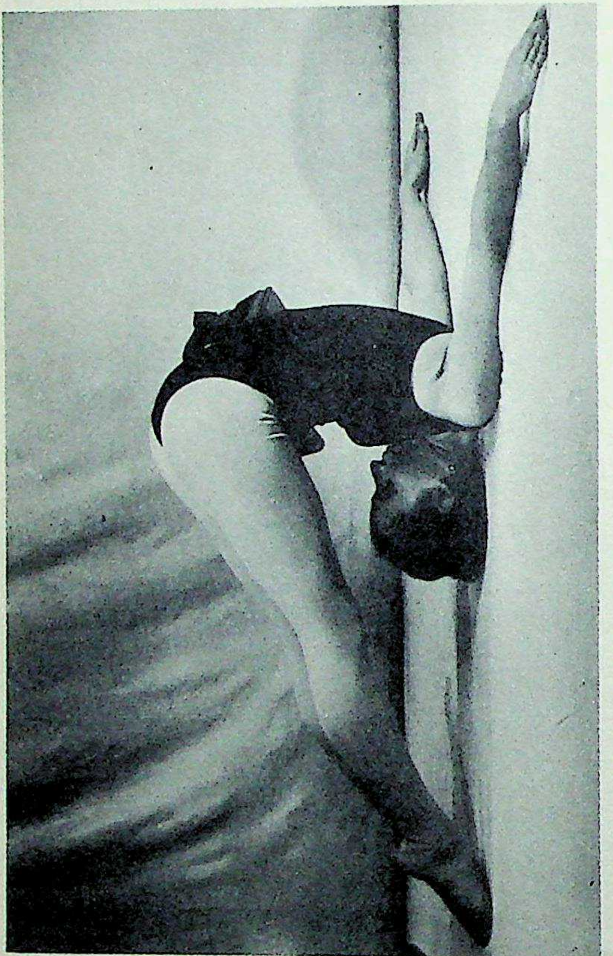


FIG. 16—HALASANA

dropping the object with which we have become one, in dropping, therefore, ourselves, then we have freed ourselves of the world of representation and are in the Absolute. This is not hypnosis, since we are doing it in full consciousness. This condition is known as *Samadhi*. Concentration, Meditation, Contemplation, Samadhi,—this, in brief, is the path of Raja-Yoga.

In trying this mental exercise, it is advantageous to select an object which attracts us, which has our fullest sympathy, something beautiful, for instance. It is evident that if our emotions help us in concentrating on the chosen object, that concentration will be made much easier and much deeper. Indians choose with predilection the flower of the lotus. Apart from being beautiful, the lotus flower also has symbolic significance for an Indian, which makes it all the more attractive to him. A Western student might choose the rose instead.

There is no doubt that consciously or unconsciously all the great creative artists have used concentration and meditation in the elaboration of their works. Without it, artistic and creative activity, in general, is unthinkable. As to contemplation, St John of the Cross describes it as follows: "The soul is steeped in deep forgetfulness; it knows not where it was or what it has done and it seems to it that no time at all has passed. And so it is really in this forgetfulness many hours may go by; when the soul awakens, it seems that only a minute has passed."

With our intellect alone we are only able to grasp the world, to understand the world in a one-sided sort of way. In conscious contemplation the fullness of life and the wisdom of the ages are near; in it we transcend the limits of our intellect and seize what lies behind the outer appearance. When we have reached this condition which we might call the intuitive state, for moments first, then for longer and longer periods and finally at will, then we have reached the sources of being. And at this stage, the effort made by us is helped by a force, an attraction from within, grace. "Knock and it shall be opened."

Development from then on is rapid, since the notion of time does not exist any more. In contemplation, the body is fully relaxed, every muscle, even the face, and the contemplative smiles the smile we see on the faces of the departed, the really living, released from the tensions of their egotistical self. In this state prayers are heard and answered. It is also the state in which we can most efficiently make suggestions for our welfare. Now we feel what we think and think what we feel. In contemplation, the consciousness of the body wanes, the consciousness of the Self grows and gathers itself in a centre.

From contemplation to Samadhi, ecstasy, is only a small step. When even questions cease, when soul and body are fully relaxed, the last stage is reached. Here God knocks at our door. The state of blessedness cannot be described with words.

Chapter 21

THE INNER YOGA

NOW that we have considered the different branches of Yogic science in its outline, we may legitimately ask ourselves where this science has its roots, from where it stems.

These roots go down to the very depths of Indian lore and literature which is one of the richest and most profound humanity has created. As Max Muller in his "India, What it can teach us", says: "If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant—I should point to India.

"And if I were to ask myself from what literature we, who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of the Greeks and Romans and of one Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human, a life not for this life only, but a transfigured and eternal life—again I should point to India."

If we were called upon to choose one book from the overwhelmingly rich store of Indian sacred literature, we would, unhesitatingly select the "Bhagavad Gita", "in order to make our inner life more perfect". The Bhagavad Gita, or "Song Celestial" is a fragment of the great epic, the "Maha-Bharata" which is comparable to the "Iliad" and "Odyssey" of the Greeks. The subject of this epic is the war between two Indian tribes, the great war of the Bharatas, which is supposed to have been fought in the thirteenth century before Christ. In it, the Bhagavad-Gita is a sort of a philosophical poem, of unknown authorship, the most noble and purest expression of Hinduism in existence. It is today considered as one of the great spiritual classics and taken by millions as their guide to the inner life. The Gita in reality is in itself a textbook of Yoga, a guide on the path by which man unites his finite self with the infinite Self. But it is not so much a synthesis of the separate systems or techniques we have discussed before, but the undivided whole of which the separate parts, Hatha-Yoga, Karma-Yoga, Bhakti-Yoga, Jnana-Yoga and Raja-Yoga are only partial interpretations. Every student of Yoga should study the Bhagavad-Gita, read it again and again and meditate on its teachings. Many good English translations of the Gita are available, the one of Mrs A. Besant being perhaps the best known. Another excellent translation is that by W. D. P. Hill (Oxford University Press), and there is, of course, the beautiful verse-translation of Sir Edwin Arnold.

We can here give only a glimpse of that vast depth under the surface of which, like golden gleaming fish, flash some of the most profound thoughts of humanity. Our selections are based on a French translation by Anna Kamensky, which we have found to be free of poetic licence and truest to the original, while still maintaining the musical rhythm of the poem.

SELECTIONS FROM THE "BHAGAVAD-GITA"

"Be concerned with the deed alone, never with its fruit. Never let the fruit of thy deeds be thy motive, as thou shalt never attach yourself to action."

"There is no pure reason for the undisciplined one; and there is no meditation for him; without meditation there is no peace. Can there be happiness without peace?"

"No man shall escape from action by shunning action; and none shall come unto perfection by mere renouncement."

"Be detached and do your duty. In performing your prescribed task with spirit unattached you shall mount to highest bliss."

"As the ignorant one acts through attachment to action, the wise one acts without attachment, for the welfare of the world."

"It is said that the senses are strong; but stronger than the senses is the intellect; stronger than the intellect is pure reason; but, in truth, greater than reason is He."

"He who abandons all attachment to the fruit of action is always content; he needs no other refuge; he does not act even in performing an action."

"Content with all he obtains naturally, freed from the pair of opposites, free of envy, equal in success and failure, he is not bound, even when he acts."

"Better than all outward sacrifice is the sacrifice of knowledge, O Prince! All actions, in their sum total culminate in wisdom."

"In truth, nothing in this world purifies like wisdom; he who is perfect in Yoga will in his time find wisdom in the Self."

"He who is full of faith, and master of his senses obtains wisdom; and having acquired it he soon reaches Peace Supreme."

"But the ignorant one who is faithless and full of doubt goes down to destruction. For him who doubts there is neither this world nor the other, nor any happiness."

"He who acts in dedicating all his actions to the Eternal One, abandoning all attachment is not troubled by sin, the same as a lotus-leaf is not touched by the waters."

"Even on this earth all is surmounted by those with an equal mind; the Eternal One is pure and immutable, that is why they live in the Eternal One."

"The pleasures arising from contact verily are only sources of pain and trouble since they have a beginning and an end, O Prince! It is not in them that the wise ones seek their joy."

"He who within himself has found joy will attain the peace of the Eternal One."

"To this peace approach those who know themselves, who have freed themselves of desire and passion, who are masters of themselves and of their thoughts."

"He who regards with the same impartiality his beloved ones, his friends and his enemies, the unknown and the indifferent, strangers and near ones, the good and the bad, goes beyond all others in Yoga."

"Verily, Yoga is not for him who eats too much and abstains too much, nor for him who sleeps too much or stays awake too long."

"Yoga kills all suffering for him who is regular in his meals and in recreation, regular in his activities, regular in sleeping and waking."

"Know that this is Yoga, this deliverance from pain. To this Yoga one should devote oneself with a firm will."

"Supreme is the joy of the Yogi whose mind is calm and the senses under control; he is sinless and becomes equal to God."

"He, whose self is harmonized through Yoga sees the Self in all creatures and all beings in the Self. Everywhere he sees the same."

"Steadfast as a lamp burning sheltered from the wind, thus is the Yogi absorbed in the Yoga of the Self."

Arjuna asks: "And he who has not mastered himself but who is full of faith, whose mind wanders ceaselessly away from Yoga and who fails to attain perfection, what becomes of him, O Krishna?"

The blessed Lord says: "O son of Pritha, neither in this world nor in the next is there destruction for him; verily he who tries to follow the path will not be lost."

"Among thousands of men one alone perhaps strives to attain perfection; of those whose efforts are crowned with success there is perhaps one who knows Me in truth."

"Four kinds of people adore Me, O Arjuna; those who suffer, those who thirst for knowledge, those who seek their personal salvation and the wise ones, O Prince of the Bharatas."

"He who at the hour of his death will think of Me alone, shall surely enter into My being."

"Whatever is offered Me with devotion: a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water, I accept it from My servant as an offering made with love."

"I am the same for all beings, no one inspires Me with attraction or dislike; but they who adore Me with devotion are in Me and I am in them."

"Even the greatest of sinners, if he adores Me undividedly, shall be considered a just one, because verily he has resolved rightly."

"O Prince! I am the Self, residing in the hearts of all beings. I am the beginning, the middle and the end of all."

"If the splendour of a thousand suns should burst forth in the heavens all at once, that would be comparable to the radiance of the great Being."

SELECTIONS FROM THE UPANISHADS

Upanishad literally means a "sitting down beside", a session, an esoteric doctrine. In a wider sense, the Upanishads are the conclusion of the Vedas and are devoted to theological and philosophical speculations on the nature of the world and man. The fundamental doctrine of the Upanishads is the identity of the individual soul (atman) with the world soul (atman-brahma). The formula "*tat tvam asi*", "thou art that", is the keynote of all Upanishad teaching. The following excerpts will exemplify this point.

Thou Art That

The father said to Svataketu, his little son:
"Bring me a fig from that fig tree yonder."
"Here is one, sir."
"Break it."
"It is broken, sir."
"What do you see there?"
"Some little seeds, sir."
"Break one of them."
"It is broken, sir."
"And what do you see now?"
"Nothing whatsoever."

Then the father said to his son: "Of that subtleness which you cannot see is the great fig tree made. In that subtleness all that exists has its essence. That is the True, that is the Self, and thou art That."

"Pray, sir," said the son, "tell me more."

"So be it, my child," the father replied and he said, "place this salt in water and come to me tomorrow morning."

The son did as he was told. Next morning the father said, "Bring me the salt which you put in the water." The son felt for it but could not find it, for the salt had dissolved.

The father said, "Taste some of the water from the surface. How is it?"

"Salty."

"Taste from the middle. How does it taste?"

"Salty."

"Taste some from the bottom. How is it?"

"Salty."

The father said, "Throw the water away and then come back to me."

The son did so; but the salt was not lost, for salt exists for ever. Then the father said, "Likewise in this body of yours, my child, you cannot perceive the True; but there it is. In the subtle essence all that exists has its being. That is the True, that is the Self, and thou, Svetaketu, art That."

—From the Chandogya Upanishad

"The Self, free from evil, ageless, deathless, sorrowless, hungerless, thirstless, real of desire, real of purpose,—that Self is to be sought after and inquired about, that Self is to be realized. All worlds he wins and all desires who understands the Self," said Prajapati.

Both the gods and the demons heard of this. "Come," they said, "let us seek out this Self so that we can win all the worlds and the fulfilment of all desires."

Thereupon Indra of the gods and Virochana of the demons set out and approached Prajapati, the famous teacher. They stayed with him as students for thirty-two years. Then Prajapati asked them: "For what reason have you lived here all this time?"

And they replied. "The Self, free from evil, ageless, deathless, sorrowless, hungerless, thirstless, real of desire, real of purpose, this should men inquire after and should seek to know. All the worlds he wins and all desires who realizes this Self. This they report to be your saying, sir, and that is why we have stayed."

Prajapati said to them: "The Being who is seen in the eye—that is the Self. That is deathless, that is fearless and that is Brahman."

"Sir," inquired the disciples, "who is seen reflected in water or in a mirror?"

"He, the Atman," was the reply. And Prajapati added: "Look at yourselves in the water, and whatever you do not understand, come and tell me."

Indra and Virochana looked at themselves in the water and when Prajapati asked them what they had seen, they replied: "Sir, we see the whole of ourselves, even to our hair and nails." Then Prajapati bid them put on their finest clothes and look again at their "selves" in the water. This they did and when asked again what they had seen in the water, they answered: "Sir, we see the Self, exactly like ourselves, well adorned in our finest clothes."

And Prajapati said: "The Self is indeed seen in these. That Self is deathless and fearless, and that is Brahman." And the students went away content.

But gazing after them Prajapati lamented: "They have gone away without comprehending the Self. Whoever follows this doctrine, as it is false, must surely perish."

Satisfied that he had found the Self, Virochana returned to the demons and explained to them that the bodily self alone should be served and that he who serves the body gains both worlds, this and the next. And this, in effect, is the doctrine of the demons; and when one of them dies they furnish his body with food and clothing, imagining that therewith he will win the world beyond.

But Indra, on his way back to the gods realized the uselessness of this knowledge. "As the Self," he reflected, "seems to be well adorned, well dressed when the body is well dressed, so too will it be blind when the body is blind, lame if the body is lame, deformed if the body is deformed. Nay more, this same Self will perish when the body perishes. I see no good in such knowledge." And so he returned to the teacher for further instruction. Prajapati received him kindly and bade him stay with him for another two-and-thirty years, after which he said to him:

"He who wanders about rejoicing in dreams—he is the Self. That is deathless and fearless, and that is Brahman."

Indra departed again, content of heart. But before he had rejoined the other angelic beings, he realized the uselessness of that knowledge also. "True it is," he said to himself, "that this new Self does not become blind if the body is blind, not lame, not deformed if the body is lame or deformed; but nevertheless even in dreams the Self is conscious of many sufferings. So I see no good even in this teaching."

And so, once more he returned to Prajapati for more instruction and stayed with him for another two-and-thirty years. At the end of that time Prajapati taught him thus: "When a man is asleep and in perfect peace, dreaming no dreams, then he realizes the Self. That is deathless, that is fearless, and that is Brahman."

Indra departed, content of heart. But even before he had reached home, he felt the fallacity of this knowledge also. "When one is asleep," he thought, "one does not know oneself as 'This is I'. One is not conscious of any existence. I see no good in this knowledge either."

So Indra went back to Prajapati once again to be taught. The teacher bade him stay another five years. At the end of that time, after having stayed with Prajapati altogether for one hundred years, the sage taught him the highest truth of the Self.

"This body," he said, "is mortal and forever in the clutch of death. But within it resides the Self, immortal and without form. This Self, when embodied, is subject to pleasure and pain. But joy and sorrow touch not what is unembodied.

Rising above physical consciousness, knowing the Self as unembodied, distinct from the sense-organs, one rejoices and passes into the Supreme Light."

—From the Chandogya Upanishad.

Study is not Enough

The Self is not realizable by study nor by intelligence and learning. The Self reveals itself only to him who devotes himself entirely to the Self.

—Katha Upanishad.

Two Birds

Two birds reside together in one tree which is the body. One of them, the soul, consumes the fruits of its actions, but the other, God, without partaking of them, witnesses all.

The soul, pressed down in the body, being deluded with ignorance, grieves at its own insufficiency, but when it perceives its mate, the origin of itself, it feels relieved.

A wise man, knowing God as residing in all creatures, forsakes all idea of duality, being convinced that there is only one existence which is God. He directs all his senses toward God alone and on Him exclusively he places his love, abstracting his mind from all worldly objects.

—Munduk Upanishad.

WISDOM OF KAPILA

(Founder of the Sankhya System of Philosophy)

Though one devotes himself to many teachers, he must take the essence, as the bee from the flowers.

He who is without hope is happy.

Not by enjoyment is desire appeased.

The lotus, wherever it grows, is beautiful and pure.

Rites are but forms and works. They are not the chief end of man.

Only soul can be liberated; because only that can be isolated, in which blind, changeful qualities are but reflected and do not constitute its essence.

YOGA APHORISMS OF PATANJALI

Patanjali probably lived in the second century B.C. and is considered the founder of the Yoga system of Indian philosophy. The Yogasutras or aphorisms are commonly ascribed to him; they formulate the principles of the Yoga philosophy. Here are a few samples.

In order to exclude from the mind questionable things, the mental calling up of those things that are opposite is efficacious for their removal.

When harmlessness and kindness are fully developed in the Yogi, there is a complete absence of enmity, both in men and animals, among all that are near to him.

From purification of the mind and body, there arises in the Yogi a thorough discernment of the cause and nature of the body.

By means of the regulation of the breath, the obscuration of the mind, resulting from the influence of the body is removed.

Fixing the mind on a place, object or subject is attention.

The continuation of this attention is contemplation.

This contemplation, when it is practised only in respect to material subject or object of sense, is meditation.

When this fixedness of attention, contemplation and meditation are practised with respect to one object, they, together constitute what is called concentration.

By performing concentration in regard to benevolence, tenderness, complacency and disinterestedness, the Yogi is able to acquire the friendship of whomsoever he may desire.

By concentrating his mind upon the solar-plexus, the Yogi acquires knowledge of the structure of the material body

By concentrating his mind upon the nerve centre in the pit of the throat, the Yogi is able to prevent his body being moved, without any resistant exertion of his muscles.

The Yogi can, after long practice, disregard the various aids to concentration hereinbefore recommended for the easier acquirement of knowledge, and will be able to possess any knowledge simply through the desire thereof.

By concentrating his mind upon the true nature of his soul as being entirely distinct from any experiences, and disconnected from all material things, and dissociated from the understanding, a knowledge of the true nature of the soul itself arises in the Yogi.

From the particular kind of concentration last described, there arises in the Yogi, and remains with him at all times, a knowledge concerning all things, whether they be those apprehended through the organs of the body or otherwise presented to his contemplation.

The powers hereinbefore described are liable to become obstacles in the way of perfect concentration, because of the possibility of wonder and pleasure flowing from their exercise, but are not obstacles for the Yogi who is perfect in the practice enjoined.

By concentrating the mind upon the relations between the ear and Akasa (the ether), the Yogi acquires the power of hearing all sounds, whether upon the earth or in the ether, and whether far or near.

By concentrating his mind upon the human body, in its relation to air and space, the Yogi is able to change, at will, the polarity of his body, and consequently acquires the power of freeing it from the control of the law of gravitation.

When the Yogi has completely mastered all the influences which the body has upon the inner man, and has laid aside all concern in regard to it, and, in no respect, is affected by it, the consequence is a removal of all obscurations of the intellect.

The Yogi acquires complete control over the elements by concentrating his mind upon the five classes of properties in the manifested universe, as, first, those of gross or phenomenal character; second, those of form; third, those of subtle quality; fourth, those susceptible of distinction as to light, action and inertia; fifth, those having influence in their various degrees for the production of fruits through their effects upon the mind.

From the acquirement of such power over the elements, there result various perfections, to wit, the power to project his inner self into the smallest atom, to expand his inner self to the size of the largest body, to render his material body light or heavy at will, to give indefinite extension to his astral body or its separate numbers, to exercise an irresistible will upon the minds of others, to obtain the highest excellence of the material body, and the ability to maintain such excellence when obtained.

In the Yogi who has acquired the accurate discriminative knowledge of the truth and of the nature of the soul, there arises a knowledge of all existences in their essential natures and a mastery over them.

In the Yogi who acquires an indifference even to the last mentioned perfection, through having destroyed the last germ of desire, there comes a state of the soul that is called Isolation.

The Yogi ought not to form association with celestial beings who may appear before him, nor exhibit wonderment at their appearance, since the result would be a renewal of afflictions of the mind.

The knowledge that springs from this perfection of discriminative power is called "knowledge that saves from rebirth". It has all things and the nature of all things for its object, and perceives all that has been and that is, without limitation of time, place or circumstances, as if all were in the present and the presence of the contemplater.

When the mind no longer conceives itself to be the knower, or experiencer, and has become one with the soul—the real knower and experiencer—Isolation takes place and the soul is emancipated.

The mind, when united with the soul and fully conversant with knowledge embraces universally all objects.

RAMAKRISHNA ON YOGA

Ramakrishna, with his pupil and disciple, Vivekananda, probably the best-known of all Yoga philosophers and Saints was born in 1833 as the youngest son of a poor Brahmin family in Bengal. At sixteen years of age, he attended the school of his eldest brother at Calcutta and followed him when he was appointed priest to the temple of the goddess Kali, founded in 1853 at Dakshinesvar. He became a devotee of Kali. The fame of his humility and wonderful teachings spread and people of all classes fell under his spell. Following are some selections from his sayings as compiled by Swami Abhedananda.

"There are infinite ways which lead to the sea of immortality. The main thing is to fall into that sea; it matters not how one gets there. Suppose there is a reservoir of nectar, a single drop of which, falling into the mouth, will make one immortal. You may drink of it either by jumping into the reservoir or by slowly walking down along its slope. The result will be the same even if you are pushed or thrown into it by another. Take a little of that nectar and become immortal.

Innumerable are the paths. Jnana, Karma, Bhakti are all paths which lead to the same goal. If you have intense longing, you will surely reach God.

Jnana-Yoga is communion with God by means of right discrimination and knowledge in its highest sense. The object of a Jnani is to know and realize the Absolute. He discriminates between the Absolute Reality and the unreal phenomenon. He says: 'Not this', 'not this', until he comes to a point where all discrimination between the Real and the unreal ceases and the Absolute Brahman is realized in Samadhi.

Karma-Yoga is communion with God by means of work. It is what you are teaching. The performance of duties, not for the sake of obtaining their results, but for the glorification of the Supreme, is that which is meant by Karma-Yoga. Again, worship, repetition of the name of the Lord, and other devotional exercises are also included in it, if they are done without attachment to the fruits and for the glorification of God.

Raja-Yoga leads to the communion with God through concentration and meditation. It has eight steps. The first is Yama, which consists of non-injuring, truthfulness, non-covetousness, chastity and the non-receiving of gifts. The second is Niyama which includes austerities, forbearance, contentment, faith, charity, study and self-surrender to the Supreme Will. The practice of various postures is comprised in Asana, the third, while Pranayama or breathing exercises constitute the fourth step. The fifth is Pratyahara and consists of making the mind introspective and one-pointed. Concentration or Dharana is the next; Dhyana or meditation is the seventh and Samadhi or the state of superconsciousness, the eighth.

Bhakti-Yoga is communication with God by means of love, devotion and self-surrender (Bhakti). It is especially adapted to this age.

The path of absolute knowledge is exceedingly difficult. The term of human life, at the present time, is short. Moreover, it is almost impossible to get rid of the idea that the soul is one with the body. Now a Jnani or philosopher may declare: 'I am not this body,—hunger, thirst, disease, birth, death, grief, pleasure, pain.' Such assertions, however, will not make him free from these bodily conditions, so long as he is on the plane of relativity. He may be compared to a person who is suffering from the intense pain of a wound but who is trying to deny it by mere word of mouth.

When the Kundalini is awakened, true Bhakti, Divine Love and ecstasy are attained. Through Karma-Yoga, one can easily attain various psychic powers. But when Karma-Yoga leads to Bhakti-Yoga, divine realization comes. Then all duties, rituals, ceremonials drop off like the petals of a flower when the fruit has grown. When a child is born, the young mother does not discharge any other duties, but fondles the child the whole day. As she is free from all household duties, so a Bhakta becomes free from the bondage of work after realizing God. The true Bhatka says: "O Mother, Karma with attachment I fear, for it proceeds from selfish motives, and as a man soweth, so shall he reap. I see again that work without attachment is exceedingly difficult. If I work through attachment I shall forget Thee: wherefore I do not desire such Karma. Grant that my work may become less and less as long as I do not attain to Thee. Till then, may I have strength to do, unattached, the little work that is left for me, and may I be blessed with unselfish love and devotion to Thee! Mother, so long as I do not realize Thee, may my mind not be attached to new works and new desires! But when Thou will command me to work, I shall do it not for myself, but only for Thee!"

Hatha-Yoga deals entirely with the physical body. It describes the methods by which the internal organs can be purified and perfect health can be acquired. It teaches how to conquer the various powers of Prana and the muscles, organs and nerves of the body. But in Hatha-Yoga, the mind must always be concentrated on the physical body. A real Hatha Yogi possesses many powers, such as the power of levitation. The practice of Hatha-Yoga will bring control over the body, but it will carry one only so far. Raja-Yoga, on the contrary, deals with the mind and leads to spiritual results through discrimination, concentration and meditation.

Perfect concentration of the mind is necessary in the path of Raja-Yoga. Mind is like the flame of a lamp. When the wind of desire blows, it is restless; when there is no wind, it is steady. The latter is the state of mind in Yoga. Ordinarily the mind is scattered, one portion here, another portion there. It is necessary to collect the scattered mind and direct it towards one point. A Yogi controls his mind, the mind does not control him. When the mind is absolutely concentrated, the soul enters into Samadhi.

A Raja-Yogi seeks to realize the Universal Being. His object is to bring the finite human soul into communion with the infinite Spirit. He tries first to collect his mind which is scattered in the world of senses, and then seeks to fix it on the Universal Spirit; hence the necessity of meditating on him in solitude and in a posture which causes no distraction."

We feel fortunate in being able to close these summary remarks on a subject which is endless, with an article from the eloquent pen of *Swami Sivananda*, no doubt the greatest living exponent of Yoga and the whole of Hindu philosophy. The renown of Sivananda, revered by thousands of his countrymen as a saint is gradually spreading abroad. Students from all over the world receive guidance and practical instruction at his Yoga-Vedanta Forest University near Rishikesh in the Himalayas. Ananda Kutir, the "Abode of Bliss", as the Ashram is called, is also the headquarters of the Divine Life Society and its monthly magazine, the "Divine Life" and of the Sivananda Publication League which publishes the works of Sivananda and of his followers. The master himself has published over two hundred books, large and small on Hindu spiritual culture. Swami Sivananda is fast attaining universal stature which may well bring to a tortured world that outer and inner peace for which it longs.

SELF REALIZATION

Swami Sivananda

Behind this world show, behind these physical phenomena, behind these names and forms, behind the feelings, thoughts, emotions and sentiments there dwells the silent witness, thy immortal friend and real well-wisher—the Purusha or world teacher, the unseen governor or master, the unknown Yogi, the invisible power of consciousness or hidden sage. That is the only permanent reality and living truth. That is Brahman or the Supreme Being, the Absolute. That is Atma. That is Self. The goal of human life is to realize the reality behind the changing phenomena. The *summun bonum* of human aspiration is to attain Self-Realization. Self-Realization, alone, can make you absolutely free and independent. Trust not your body, mind and the senses. Have inner spiritual life. Attain knowledge of the Self through steady devotions and discipline. Drink the nectar of immortality, quench the flames of Samsar and allay its tortures, miseries and sorrows.

Friends: Is there not a higher mission in life besides eating, sleeping and talking? Is there not a higher form of bliss than the transitory and illusory pleasures of the world? Is there not a more dignified life than the life of the senses? How uncertain is life here! How painful is this mundane life! Should we not attempt diligently now to reach a place, the immortal abode, our original sweet home of pristine purity and divine splendour where there is eternal sunshine, absolute security, perfect peace, and where there is neither disease, nor death, nor war?

Come! Come! Become a Yogi. Come out of your narrow holes or ruts. Crush all sorts of superstition. Aim high. To become a lawyer, a doctor, an engineer or a professor is the height of your ambition. Can this give you any kind of real freedom? Can this give you eternal bliss? Can this give you everlasting peace? Can this make you immortal? Would you not like to attain perfection and immortality? Then come. Struggle for higher things. Be bold. Look not back. March forward. Inquire: Who am I? Hear and reflect, meditate and realize the Atmic splendour. OM is Sat Chit Ananda. OM is Infinity. OM is Eternity. OM is immortality. Sing OM. Chant OM. Feel OM.

—SWAMI SIVANANDA.

GLOSSARY

Help To Pronunciation

â like a in far
a somewhat like u in but
e like a in name
i like ee in see

u like oo in too
s like sh in shall
ch like ch in much
ai like i in fine

In this glossary are to be found words most commonly used in books on Yoga, as well as those employed in this volume.

Achâria, spiritual teacher.
Adharma, absence of virtue.
Advaita, non-dualism.
Ahamkara, egoism.
Ahimsa, non-resistance.
Ajna-Cakra, the sixth lotus of the Yogis, corresponding to a nerve centre in the brain between the eye-brows.
Anahâta-Cakra, the fourth lotus near the heart.
Ananda, bliss.
Arjuna, the hero of the Bhagavad Gita.
Asana, a posture of the body.
Asrama, ashram or hermitage.
Atma, the Eternal Self, the Absolute.

Bhanda, tension, stress, bondage.
Bhagavad-Gita, The Song Celestial. A philosophical poem, part of the Mahabaratha containing the essence of Vedanta philosophy.
Bhakti, devotion, love.
Bhakti-Yoga, union with the divine ground through love.
Brahma, the Creator of the universe.
Brahman, the One Existence, the Absolute.
Buddha, the Enlightened, the name given to one of the greatest Incarnations, born about 500 B.C.
Buddhi, reason, the determinative faculty.

Cakra, wheel. The name given the nerve centres or lotus through which the power of Kundalini moves upwards.
Cakras: Muladhara, Svadhistana, Manipura, Anahata, Vishudda, Ajna and Sahasrara.
Chândogya-Upanishad, one of the oldest Upanishads of the Veda.,
Chitta, or Cittam, mind-stuff, the intellect with three aspects, Cittam Manas and Buddhi. Cittam receives the perception.

Dharana, concentration.
Dhyana, meditation.

Ekagra, concentrated state of mind.

Grihesu, Grihastha, householder, head of family.
Guna, quality, attribute of matter. There are three Gunas: Tamas, Rajas and Sattwa.
Guru, spiritual teacher.

Hatha-Yoga, the art and science of controlling body and mind.
Hatha-Yogi, one who practises Hatha-Yoga.

Idâ, nerve current on the left side of the spinal cord; also the left nostril.
Indra, ruler of the gods.
Indriyas, the five senses, the internal organs of perception.

Jnana, pure intelligence, knowledge.

Kala, time.
Kama, desire.
Kali, goddess of time, mother of the universe.
Kapila, author of the Sankhya philosophy.
Karma, work or action; the law of cause and effect in the moral world.
Karma-Yoga, union with the divine ground through the unselfish devotion to duty.
Krishna, an incarnation of God who appeared in India about 1400 B.C. His teachings are embodied in the Bhagavad-Gita.
Kriya, action, ritual, ceremonial.
Kshatriya, member of the second, warrior caste of ancient India.
Kundalini, lit. the "coiled up", the energy located in the lowest Cakra, the Muladhara Cakra at the end of the spine and which, when awakened through Yoga exercises, rises through all the Cakras and leads to the direct perception of God.

Mahâbhârata, the great Indian epic, longest poem in literature; it contains the Bhagavad-Gita.
Manas, the deliberative faculty of the mind.
Mahatma, great soul.
Manipura-Cakra, "city of jewels". The third lotus, or Cakra, the solar-plexus.
Mantram, any prayer, holy verse, sacred or mystic word recited during worship. The faith in the magic power of the word. Example: "Om mani padme hum" (O jewel in the lotus).
Maya, illusion. The veil which our senses lay over creation and which makes us mistake the unreal and phenomenal for the real and the eternal.
Muladhara, the lowest lotus, or Cakra at the end of the spine. Its awakening results in the entering of the unconscious in the conscious sphere.
Mundaka-Upanishad, one of the twelve principal Upanishads.

Nadi, a tube along which flows Prana energy.
Net, neti, "not this, not this."
Nirvâna, freedom; extinction of delusions.

Glossary

Niyama, self-discipline; the virtues of contentment, mortification, cleanliness, study and devotion.

OM or Omkara, the most holy word of the Vedas meaning the Supreme Being, the Ocean of Knowledge and Bliss Absolute.

Paramahamsa, Supreme soul.
Patanjali, the founder of the Yoga School of Philosophy.
Pingala, the nerve current on the right side of the spinal cord; also the right nostril.
Prâna, the vital force of the body and in the universe.
Prânayama, control of Prana through breathing exercises.
Pratyâhâra, diversion of the senses from the objects. Making the mind introspective.
Purusha, the soul.

Raja, the king, royal.
Rajas, movement with an aim, energy, the second condition of matter (Guna).
Raja-Yoga, the path which aims at the conquest of the inner nature, for the purpose of realizing Divinity.
Ramakrishna, (1836-1886). An Indian saint whose goal was the union of all religions, since they all proclaim the same truth.
Rama, incarnation of the god Shiva on earth. Hero of the Ramayana, the great Indian epic.
Rishi, a Sage.
Rechaka, exhalation, (Kumbhaka, inhalation).

Sahasrâra-Câkra, "the thousand-petaled lotus", the nerve centre or Cakra on the top of the head.
Samâdhi, super-consciousness.
Samaskara, impression, memory, unconscious mind. According to Indian thought we carry within us not only Samaskaras from this life, but also from previous incarnations; they are what causes reincarnation.
Samyama, control of the powers of the mind.
Sanskrit, Indian language in which the Vedas and other holy scriptures are written, in contrast to Prakrit, the popular language.
Sannyasin, Godseeker who has made the vow of poverty and chastity.
Santi, peace.
Sat-Chit-Ananda, existence-knowledge-bliss.
Sattvam, third condition of matter, swinging movement, clear, light matter.
Shankara, Indian philosopher born 788 A.D.
Shiva, Indian god, the "destroyer" of the Indian trinity, Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva.
Shudra, member of the fourth caste, servants.
Siddhi, memory, also any religious work except the Vedas.
Sushumnâ, the name given to the hollow canal which runs through the centre of the spinal cord.
Sri, blessed, holy.
Shruti, the Vedas.

Glossary

Sutra, lit. "thread". Usually means aphorism.

Svâdhisthâna, lit. "abode of Self". Second lotus or Cakra between the base of the spine and navel.

Tamas, the lowest condition of matter (Guna), darkness, inertia.

Tapas, control of the body through fasting or other means.

"Tat tvam asi", "Thou art that".

Upanishad, the most mysterious part of the Vedanta (and of Vedas). They were taught in various schools and are named, in part, after these, such as "Kathaka-Upanishad" from the school of the Kathas.

Vaishya, the third caste, merchants and peasants.

Vasana, a habit or tendency like an odour, from an impression remaining in the mind from past Karma.

Vedas, the Hindu-Scriptures consisting of the Rig-Veda, the Yajur-Veda, the Sama-Veda, the Artharva-Veda; also the Brahamanas, the Upanishads; comprising the hymns, rituals and philosophy of the Hindu religion.

Vedanta, end of Vedas, explanations given at the end of each Veda; also the final philosophy of the Vedas as expressed in the Upanishads.

Vishuddha-Cakra, the fifth lotus or Cakra, in the throat.

Vritti, lit. "whirlpool". A modification of the mind.

Yama, discipline, Prana-Yama, discipline of the breath. Yama, discipline in regard to others, Niyama, discipline in regard to self.

Yoga, joining, union of the lower self with the higher self by means of the different paths or Yogas, Hatha-Yoga, Karma-Yoga, Bhakti-Yoga, Jnana-Yoga, Raja-Yoga. Generally, any sort of culture that leads to God.

Yogi, one who practises Yoga.

Two Hypnotism Titles Which Will Interest You

MODERN HYPNOTISM — KEY TO THE MIND

by DR. S. J. van PELT

The author is president of the British Society of Medical Hypnotists and a member of the Society for Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis.

"The whys, how and wherefores of hypnotism are answered neatly and delightfully in a little book.

"The doctor answers 14 major questions like these: Who can be a hypnotist? Who can be hypnotized? How is a person hypnotized? Is there any danger in hypnotism?

"Part of the answer to the question, 'what is hypnotism' defines it as 'really a super concentration of the mind.' In the ordinary state the mind is occupied with many different impressions, so that the mind power is scattered. Therefore any suggestions given in this condition goes in one ear and out the other."

—*International News Service*

cloth bound $2.50 soft bound $1.00

SCIENTIFIC AUTOSUGGESTION

by DR. ALFRED E. JOHNS

A concise and clear psychological book, written specifically for the layman, presenting in simple language the latest developments in medical and related sciences. Dr. Johns shows how the latest discoveries in psychosomatic medicine have confirmed the successful cures claimed by Coue.

$2.95

ASSOCIATED BOOKSELLERS
WESTPORT, CONN.

Recommended Publications

THE STUDY AND PRACTICE OF YOGA

by HARVEY DAY $2.50

This fascinating book provides in everyday language a practical exposition of the science of Yoga. By means of splendid illustrations the reader is shown how to perform those postures and exercises the practice of which will bring beneficial effects both physically and mentally.

It further describes how the application of Yoga principles and exercises will strengthen your Nerves, create Healthier Glands, Control your Weight and Preserve your Youth—How it will stimulate Clear Thinking—How it makes the fit person fitter and the ailing well.

ABOUT YOGA

THE COMPLETE PHILOSOPHY

by HARVEY DAY $2.00

The author does not claim that this is the complete text-book on Yoga for, he maintains, the Yoga Philosophy can only be mastered by long and arduous practice. He does show, however, how a great deal of Yoga can be adapted to suit a civilized way of living and if practiced regularly, how it will clear your mind; increase your powers of concentration and determination and help you to overcome worry and fear—how it can make you fit, mentally and physically.

PALMISTRY FOR EVERYMAN

by VERA COMPTON $2.50

A basic and authoritative manual on the reading of character from the palm, and from such other signs as the length and shape of the fingers, the nails, and the hand generally. The book is fully illustrated both with line drawings and with facsimiles of hand-prints of special interest.

PERSONALITY IN HANDWRITING

by ERIC SINGER $2.50

In the course of his study of the guiding image, Dr. Singer shows the reader, usually in simple tabular form with examples, some of the many fascinating deductions that can be made from such things as addresses on envelopes, doodles, signature, mistakes and corrections, children's writing, and the influence that the subject matter itself may have on a person's writing.

Obtainable through any bookseller or direct from

ASSOCIATED BOOKSELLERS
WESTPORT, CONN.

Yoga for Perfect Health

'Alain'

1763

BOOKSELLER